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H *Otia Christiana :*

OR,

CHRISTIAN RECREATIONS.

BEING A

CONFERENCE

BETWIXT

NICON AND *PHILOTHEUS*.

In which divers important Concerns of the
Doctrine and *Practice* of RELIGION, are
fairly and familiarly discoursed.

1759

WRITTEN BY

20.11.

JAMES HOG, Minister of the Gospel,

While in a frail Estate of Body, and much disabled
for greater Labours.

Divided into several *DIALOGUES*.

A B E R D E E N :

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MDCCLXXVI.

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P R E F A C E.

READER,

YOU may easily conjecture, that the following Sheets were not written with an Intention to have them exposed to public View: I undertook not any of my rude Scripts from such a Design, though divers Things, ordered in Providence, have thrust forth some of them, with considerable Difficulty on my Part. As to the present Enterprize, I think it my Duty to account, in a few Words, both for the Publication and the Management of the Work, such as it is. Know then, that I did communicate most of the Purposes to several of my judicious Friends, whose Understanding and Experience of the Power of Godliness I greatly honour, and who have, through Grace, been many Ways useful to me for Conviction and Instruction. And I own it, that Closeness and Freedom of Correspondence, or Communication about Matters of this Sort, hath been for several Years, ordinarily adhibited by divers of us on either Hand, to which I reckoned myself the more especially bound, seeing my ministerial Calling requireth, That

a Concern about such Things as belong unto the common Salvation should be my entire Business. And as it is wholly owing to these desirèable Persons, that the following Notes appear to thy View ; so I was not a little pressed with various Difficulties in the Conduct of this Business, being loth to deny the earnest Requests of some, with whom the Secret of the Lord is, and who are acquainted with his Covenant ; not knowing, but that some Call from the Lord might have been conveyed in that Manner ; and yet afraid, lest their Importunity should, at least too early, carry out my poor and unpolished Thoughts, written for a kind of spiritual Diversion to myself, when several Things in the State of my Body did apparently presage that the frail Tabernacle could not long stand. In this suspense the Matter continued, till it was brought to a more narrow Point: That either I must have peremptorily refused, or at least allowed them my Papers to be managed as they should find most conducive for their own Edification : And having understood their fixed Design, to have a Part of them published at this Time, I found at length Liberty to comply ; for which I could adduce several Grounds, that bore weight with me, which yet I shall wave at present, referring entirely to the Tract itself. As to the Management, you will find much
Free.

Freedom used on either Hand, and some Particulars more closely touched, than I would have done, had I thought of any further Communication of these poor Notes, than only to my intimate Friends. Yet upon a Review, I saw not how I could delete them, without making such a Change in the Mould of the whole, as neither Time nor Inclination could allow me to attempt. And considering that the Nature of Dialogues may allow some more Liberty of this Sort, than were expedient in other Treatises, and that the whole is of a common christian Concern, I the rather submitted. As to the Particulars, and some of them of a near Relation to the present Time, and Circumstances of this Church, which are amicably debated betwixt the Dialogists; as I hope you will find them managed with due Respect to Persons of Note, who may be otherwise minded; so I advance no singular Opinion, but have adduced, and could yet adduce more, of the best human Authority, for evincing the Harmony: But in things of such a Nature I ordinarily rest satisfied, having represented my Grounds without making any narrow Enquiry into the Sentiments of others; as to which I am not well furnished either for Means or Occasion. Yet this I can solemnly attest, That I have candidly imparted the utmost which I thought

to

to be of weight on either side, without suppressing any Thing which, to the best of my Remembrance, was at one Time or other straitening to myself; seeing I own no other Intertest in those Matters, but that of Truth. As to the Meanness of the Performance, I am truly, and, I may say, deeply sensible of innumerable Weaknesses, which attend every Part of my Administration, who, I confess, am rude both in Speech and Knowledge. Notwithstanding, and tho' a humbling Reflection covereth me with Blushes, yet I want not encouraging Hopes of Improvement, in a way of believing Attendance at the Throne of Grace; and am most willing to receive Instruction from these whom the Lord hath taught. In the mean while, a serious Consideration of the Lord's having chosen the weak Things of this World, preventeth my Distrust. as to the Success, providing our Eyes be sincerely and only fixed upon the Lord for his blessing the poor Essay, and that the purposes be considered without Prejudice. This I have the more Confidence humbly and earnestly to desire, for that I can with the greatest Solemnity declare, that I have no other Design in the whole, save the clearing and vindicating of some Part of revealed Truth, in a suitableness to the received Principles of this and other reformed Churches, together with

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an ingenuous Representation of divers remarkable Strokes of Providence, both humbling and instructive, in my own Christian Course, might it please the Lord to render such a poor Mite conducive towards advancing of any Interest of his Kingdom and Gospel.

JAMES HOG.

The first of these is the
 fact that the population of
 the country is increasing
 rapidly, and that the
 number of people who are
 engaged in agriculture is
 also increasing. This is
 due to the fact that the
 land is being cultivated
 more extensively than
 ever before, and that the
 number of people who are
 engaged in agriculture is
 also increasing.

JOURNAL

OTIA CHRISTIANA:

O R,

Christian Recreations:

BEING

A Conference betwixt *Nicon* and *Philothheus*, &c.

DIALOGUE I.

Containing some Generals, and a Proposal of that which is the Scope of the whole.

Phil. **H**ONoured and most indeared *Nicon*, I have greatly longed for an Opportunity of particular and free Communication with you, seeing my Circumstances are such as to allow me little Occasion for any thing of that Nature; and Closeness in Communings of this sort is not easily attained; yea, divers Attempts towards it prove abortive in these Dregs of Time.

Nic. Many humbling Reasons, which procure this, might be adduced, which yet I incline not to mention, being loth to expose the low Estate of Religion amongst us, as to its *Life* and *Power* (although there want not some few Witnesses). One, among others, may be, much Want of Singleness in looking out for, and waiting upon a gracious Conduct, having our Expectations only from *Israel's* Shepherd, who leadeth *Joseph* like a Flock. Sometimes, there may be Mistakes in the Choice,

B

whether

whether of *Season, Persons, Manner of Conveyance,* or other Circumstances, which would need to be adjusted towards the Success of such *Enterprizes*; besides that some Freedom of Mind, with a Disintanglement from other *Incumbrances* and *Business*, and a large Measure of Time, were requisite for such an Exercise: And that on either hand, while many *excellent Ones of the Earth* are so difficultly flated, that these Conveniences are not easily attainable with them. And, O that there were not too much Ground to bemoan a great Defect of Inclination that way, whether through much Want, Weakness, and Confusion as to the Main, or a just Restraint of Influences, altho' the Duty be most necessary and seasonable, especially in an evil Time! *Mal. iii. 16. Heb. x. 24.* We are likewise in danger, through a kind of childish Fondness, of putting Trust in the Arm of Flesh, and entertaining vain and idolatrous Expectations from the Creature, when fair Probabilities of Success have a flattering Influence; and hence our Hopes are justly blasted: So that for refreshing Wells, we find Brooks of *Teman*. Whereas *Light* is only acceptably sought and found in a way of *Singleness*. *Jer. xvii. 5. Is. xl. 5. 1 Pet. i. 24. Matth. 6. 22.*

Phil. Your Admonition is necessary and seasonable. The good Lord preserve us from dashing upon any of these *Rocks*, whether now, or in the Course of our *Warfare*: And seeing I am satisfied with the Desirableness of the Mean, and that the Season, with other Circumstances, is most apposite, I intend (O may it be with my Eyes only towards the Lord!) freely to impart my whole Heart unto you, as to the most pressing Intrigues of my late and

present Strugglings with an evil Heart of Unbelief, which procureth great and unaccountable Departings from the living God, *Heb. iii. 12* And, in the Entry, I must acquaint you (dear *Nicon*) that my bodily Health is impaired: And tho' there be no great Appearance of Danger, yet my Enemies watch for all Advantages, which that State of Matters can afford them, and fail not to catch at the same with much Eagerness. *Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. and xv. 15.* I cannot deny but that this Period of my Life is attended with Joy, Peace, and somewhat of Enlargement, amidst divers Straitenings. Nevertheless, the pungent Edge of several *Temptations* is considerably sharp, and my Conflicts, at times, smart, though not long nor violent.

Nic. I understand how Matters will readily be with you in that circumstantiated Case. Upon the one hand, the Prospect of *departing and being with Christ*, will sometimes be sweet, *2 Cor. v. 1, 2, 3, &c. Phil. i. 23.* Yet, on the other, Conscience will smite, and Challenges arise, lest an impatient Fondness have insinuated itself, contrary to that becoming Willingness of abiding at our respective fighting *Posts*, where the Captain of our Salvation hath placed us. No Man shall be crowned except he have striven lawfully, both according to *Rule* and to the End of the *Warfare*, *2 Tim. ii. 5.* We may not desert our Colours in the Throng of the War. The good Fight must be foughten, the Faith kept, and our Course finished, *2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.* Consider that Passage, *John xvii. 15. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the World, but that thou shouldest keep them from the Evil.* The Heaviness and direful Aspect of a Time of great and growing.

Wickedness, together with present and imminent Strokes, as also diverse particular Incumbrances of your own Lot (howsoever convenient) may tempt you to weary. Great *Elijah's* flaming Love and ardent Zeal had some Smoke of this Sort intermingled, when he requested for himself that he might die, and said, *It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my Life: for I am not better than my Fathers,* 1 Kings xix. 4. We have a plain Rule: And howsoever the Believer may *groan earnestly, desiring to be cloathed upon with his House which is from Heaven,* 2 Cor. v. 2. yet still with that *Temper, Submission, and Acquiescence* in a sovereign and wise Disposition, as will preserve from interfering with the foresaid *Solemn and Intercessory Prayer*. It is dangerous for us to clash with our Lord in our Prayers, and in the Strain of our Exercise and Concern.

Phil. You have touched me nearly, I acknowledge, and unvailed much of my secret Guilt in these Instructions and Admonitions, unto which my Soul desired humbly to echo, *That which I see not, teach thou me; wherein I have done Iniquity, may I do no more,* Job xxxiv. 31, 32. Yet this is not my more immediate nor present Strait. My Times are in the Lord's Hand; and, to be plain with you, dear *Nicon*, I cannot say that my poor Concern, such as it is, is more directly conversant either about Life or Death; the naked Truth of the Matter is, that I am daily haunted with a Variety of Temptations of an exquisite Malignity and Keenness: And tho' I cannot complain (as altogether *tossed with Tempests and not comforted*; as sometimes, yea, often and long I have been) *Isaiah* liv.

11. and l. 10. yet the Difficulties want not their pungent Edge. But that I may account the more clearly for this, I shall first represent the *Thesis* which my Soul would fain hold fast, and then account for the various Methods wherein it is impugned.

Nic. I shall be glad to hear the Account: yet suffer me, dear Friend, previously to remind you, that it is a great Iniquity, and yet a Snare in which we readily fall, *viz.* To entertain hard and uneasy Impressions of our gracious Lord, and Wisdom's pleasant Ways, because of the Conflicts that accompany them. It were an inexcusable *Solecism* in Soldiers or Seafaring Men, to think strange of Hardships: neither could it well be allowed in them to quarrel the Disposition, when they are put to grapple with Storms, and Assaults greater and closer than ordinary. The Christian's Work and Calling is a Warfare, 2 *Tim.* ii. 3. 2 *Cor.* xii. 9. This is his usual Business: he is to fight for every Step, or at least to lay his account for so much. *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and only the Violent take it by Force.* *Matt.* xi. 12. And you may know, dear Sir, that both in War and Seafaring, besides the ordinary Labours, there are diverse Seasons of extraordinary Difficulty. *We were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we even despaired of Life,* 2 *Cor.* i. 8. Hence I tender you a Consideration or two, towards your Encouragement. 1. That amidst the highest Stretches of the Subtilty and furious Rage of Enemies, the Lord will preserve and maintain his own Work. *Luke* xxii. 31, 32. *Hebr.* xii. 2, 3. 2. The closer that the Fight be, the more is gained, and the more speedily; the whole being, in this Case, much ad-

adjusted towards the Discovery of a Deity, and the strengthening of Faith, while the Hand of the Lord doth eminently appear, in his preserving, yea, and quickening a little Sparkle of spiritual Life amidst all these swelling Seas. These Winds, howsoever strong, do carry the Vessel the more quickly towards the Haven of Everlasting Rest. *2 Tim.* iv. 7, 8.

1 Cor. ix. 26, 27. 3. As the Lord's and our Enemies are brought down no other way; so the more pressing and pointed these Conflicts be, the Gain is the sweeter and the more solid. Neither shall Corruptions and Temptations, defeated and weakned in these pitched and decisive Battles, again recover their former Strength in future Assaults. Thus the Old Man loseth gradually his Life and Spirits, as nailed to a Cross; *Gal.* v. 24. *Col.* iii. 2, 3, 5, &c. so that After-Strugglings must needs be the weaker.

Phil. I accept of your seasonable and encouraging Admonitions; the Lord grant they may be mixed with Faith on my Part: I shall now go on to account, as I proposed, for the State of Matters under my poor Tossings (I blush to use the Designation of Warfare). The *Thesis* then, against which all the Stir of so many contrary Suggestions and Temptations continueth to be made with so much indefatigable Closeness of Application, is a clear Truth, which the very Notion of a Deity plainly implieth, is often repeated in Scripture, and manifestly confirmed in the Course of Providence, especially in the undoubted Experience of all who fear the Lord, and who, from time to time, enjoy many sweet Fruits of the same. *Deut.* xxxii. 4. *Hebr.* xi. 5, 6. *Mark* vii. 37. &c. viz. *He is the Rock, and His Work is perfect, for all His Ways are*

Judg.

Judgment. A God of Truth and without Iniquity, Just and right is he: He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He hath done all things well, &c. In a word, it is the Lord's Testimony concerning his Goodness and Mercy through Christ, as clearly and plentifully revealed in the Gospel. And to my Shame I must acknowledge, that my Doubtfulness, Fears and manifold Staggingings as to this, have a Dye of Enormity deeper in me, than these, or even more open and manifest Evils, could have in others; for that I find the Obstinacy of Unbelief *here*, in a peculiar manner, unparalleled, after that it hath been so many a time confounded. This is an Infernal *Hydra* of a strange Nature, seeing not only new Heads start up, after that the former had (as I had thought) been cut off, but even the very same do quickly recover renewed Vigour.

Nic. You have no cause (my dear *Philotheus*) to think strange, or to entertain doubtful and discouraging Thoughts on this Head. *No Temptation hath herein befallen you, but that which is common to Man.* 1 Cor. x. 13. I have observed, after a continued Track of Wrestlings, lengthened out to a considerable Measure of Time, that our Lying and murdering Enemies do ordinarily set on foot and manage to the utmost, a double Engine towards the Extinction of any Measure of Light which the Believer enjoyeth concerning a Deity as revealed in the Gospel, after that the Lord hath graciously manifested himself so as he doth not manifest himself unto the World. 1. They attack us more directly upon this great Foundation, viz. *God is, and is a Rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.* Hebr. xi. 6. Ps. lvi. 11. Eph. vi. 16. To which effect, many

many a Shower of fiery Darts is poured in ; and all imaginable Dust raised for blackening of Providence, and blasting the Credit of Revelation. Hell itself is ransacked by them for the most exquisite and malicious Exceptions and Cavils which they can possibly contrive, and the whole attended and enforced with such a measure of Obstinacy and noisome infernal Air, as would quite confound the poor tossed Creature, did not the Lord send forth his Light and his Truth into the Heart. *Pf.* xliiii. 3. and xxvii. 1. 2. 3. and xxxv. 3, &c. And I take this Occasion to acquaint you, dear Friend, that all these so much applauded or feared Stratagems, are but silly and childish Toys, meer Bugbears, without any Strength but what they owe to a sort of intoxicating or enchanting Influence ; for although their Suitableness to the Prejudices and Propossessions of our darkened and Atheistical Minds, procure them a proportioned Countenance, and much of the profane Wit and Learning of the World is more openly or covertly laid out in that Matter, yet one Word from the Lord, I understand some such Passage of Scripture as it pleaseth him to speak into the Heart, *I am the Lord, I am God, and there is none else, &c.* goeth so far to the very Bottom of all these Arts, and dispelleth the Mist to such a degree, that the Believer is even filled with Shame and Wonder that he should have been straitened in the least, and can even hardly condescend upon the Difficulty. Without this, I know of no true Issue ; but this is sure, clear and safe. *He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, &c. Through Faith we understand that the Worlds were made. Hebr.* xi. 6. and 3. But when this

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Project is defeated, another succeedeth, which proveth Matter of Wrestling to the exercised Soul, throughout the Course of his Life, *viz.* 2. A subtile and strong pushing of our unbelieving Minds towards the entertaining hard and heavy Thoughts concerning the Lord, when, amidst the Thickets of Temptations, and Troubles, his Goodness, Mercy and Faithfulness are questioned, or the perplexed Soul staggereth about them, and cannot reach the Confidence of Faith, or but little of it, although it is stirring in the mean while but faintly. *Zion saith, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me, &c. Hath he forgotten to be gracious? &c. This is mine Infirmary, &c. Is. lxxi. 14 Ps. lxxvii. 7, 8, &c.*

Phil. You have hit right, honoured *Nicon*, and I have had my Share of the former; but it is the latter part of the Engine which hath been Matter of various Struggles to me for a long time, and continueth to be so, though not to that Degree as heretofore; and I must acknowledge, to the Praise of sovereign and free Mercy, that all these Conflicts have still been sweetened, more or less, by supporting and refreshing Influences from Heaven. And now I would enter upon a more close Account of the various Methods, wherein I find the Faith of Goodness and Mercy through Christ, assaulted. Only I adventure previously to crave your Thoughts about a Case relative to the present purpose, about which I have been often straitened, and would gladly have more Light, might it please the Father of Lights to bestow it by blessing this Mean, *viz.* Seeing the Testimony of the God of Truth is clear, manifold and abundant, and the very same Light

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which

which discovereth that God is, doth with the same Evidence display his Goodness, whereof the Scriptures, yea, the Heavens and the Earth, are full: And forasmuch as the Believer, through Grace, holdeth fast the Lord's Testimony that he is; whence is it that he should be so obnoxious to Staggers in circumstantiated Cases, about his Goodness and Mercy? Sure it is one and the same divine Testimony, which discovereth and assureth us of both; and he who believeth *that God is*, doth also *believe that he is a Rewarder of them who diligently seek him*. Where can the Want ly? The Mind is enlightened, the Believer hath no Objection, but is satisfied about the Truth, and setting his Seal to it, and yet falls behind as to the Faith, when the Exercise thereof would be most necessary and seasonable, so that contrary Temptations and Troubles detect and ordinarily surprize him with the Discovery of a great deal of Weakness.

Nic. Your Query (dear *Philotheus*) remindeth me of a scriptural Instance greatly parallel unto what I judge you design therein; *viz.* That of the Two Disciples going to *Emmaus*. They knew and believed *Jesus of Nazareth* to be the *Messiah*, and had also a good and clear Information of his having arisen from the Dead, which, after Trial, they found to hold as was reported; yet their Doubtfulness is not removed. *We trusted that it had been he who would have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, To day is the third Day, &c.* But our Lord unfolds clearly the whole Matter, *O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things? &c.* There's a strange Sottishness and Backwardness which

possesseth our Minds, so that we're afraid to believe the Lord's Testimony, and do strangely (shall I term it?) hang back, and refuse to be brought up to some Confidence of Faith, even after that he hath wonderfully removed many Obstacles out of our Way. The obstinate Resistance of an evil Heart of Unbelief is wonderful; and there's somewhat strange and unaccountable in it, that when the Way is made very plain, and the exercised Soul hath nothing to object, yet a treacherous Heart draweth back, and cannot be induced resolutely to believe. See this whole History, *Luke xxiv.* from 13.

Phil. I have much humbling Experience, and I think beyond any living, of the Truth of what you say. But bear with me, dear *Nicon*, that I desire a more particular and close Account of this Matter; and therefore I crave your Thoughts about the Main Source and the effectual Cure of this Malady.

Nic. The Fountain I have found and do still find to be, much Weakness as to the Knowledge and Faith of a Deity: For I am fully persuaded, and the Lord hath taught me with a strong Hand, that, after such Manifestation, which the Lord giveth of himself unto his Children, and not unto the World, the very same Light which manifesteth himself and further confirmeth us that he is, doth, in the same manner, and with the like Evidence, clear up and satisfy the Soul as to whatsoever he is to believe concerning the True God, and thus setteth him in joint as to the Joy and Confidence of Faith in every Christian Concern, with reference to whatsoever is exercising to him. He who, in some measure of Throughness, believeth that God is, doth in the like

manner, and with a proportioned Assurance, believe that he is a Rewarder of them who diligently seek him; which, being adjusted to the Believer's particular Circumstances, cannot but drain the Mind from whatsoever is disturbing to the sweet Repose of Faith. *Psf. xviii. 46. Rom. xv. 13. John iv. 9. Psf. xxvii. 1, 2, 3, &c Hebr. xi. and 6.* But when Light and Faith are low, though sincere, and the Person (may I so express it?) hath but a weak Grip of the Lord's Testimony concerning himself, contained in the Word, every contrary Suggestion and Appearance shaketh him accordingly, and more especially these which have a peculiar Degree of Intricacy and Violence; much like to the Condition of these, who have indeed a good Title, yet are but weak as to the Understanding of it; and therefore every Quibble proves uneasy to them, which, otherwise, would scarcely cost them a Thought, save of just Contempt and Indignation, did they understand the true State of Matters. Hence, upon a clear Discovery, they are out of all Patience with themselves for their Stupidity and sottish Silliness. The only way then to Relief, I know, is an humble Attendance upon the Lord for further Confirmation that he liveth and reigneth, who hath said, *Because I live, ye shall live also. John xiv. 19.* As all the Advantages which our Enemies have against us in a way of Temptation (so far as I can discern) proceed from Remains of Weakness, as to the entire Credit and Deference which we owe to the Authority of the God of Truth, who hath revealed his Mind in the Word, which ultimately devolveth into a piece of Heart-Atheism, so a Restoration of the Soul into the
entire

entire Belief of divine Truth, without any farther enquiring (when once his Testimony is known) is the only sure and adequate Remedy. In this, *Abraham's Faith* is eminent and conspicuous, who *staggered not at the Promise of God, thro' Unbelief, but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God, Rom. iv. 19, 20.*

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DIALOGUE II.

Which containeth the first grand Difficulty ordinarily proposed and pushed against the general Thesis, viz. A lamentable Change which godly Persons undergo as to Spirituals, when heavy Clouds of Darkeness succeed unto the sweetest Ravishments of Joy, in beholding and adoring the Glory of Christ.

Phil. I Am satisfied with your Answer to my last Query, and shall take the Freedom the more pleasantly to represent the most considerable Difficulties, which I have been put to conflict with, about the forementioned *Thesis*: for which effect, be pleased to know, dear *Nicon*, that tho' I dare not complain, as if the Lord were unto me like a *barren Wilderness*, &c yet I have been much surprized and afflicted to find my Accounts fail, as to what I expected would have been the Conduct of Providence and my Way of Advance in a christian Course, which many a Time hath raised Fears, lest Matters might be going backward, and, at Times, insinuated heavy Suspicions about the Foundation. The first Discoveries of the Pearl and *Treasure hid in the Field* procured, may I say it, an effectual and
plea.

pleasant Divorce from other Lords and Lovers: *Matth. xiii. 44, 45. Is. xxxiii. 17. Song v. 16.* And after that, it was with me for a considerable Time, as with the Eunuch of old, who went on his way rejoicing, and I expected a gradual Increase, tho' in a way of Fighting, but without these Shakings and heavy Nights of Distress, which I had undergone for a long Time before, and was encouraged to this Hope, seeing *we have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear. God hath not given us the Spirit of Fear, but of Power, and of Love, and of a sound Mind, Rom. viii. 15. 2 Tim. i. 7.* Yet a sad Change succeeded, and I was much put to it to keep my Ground, having been attacked as to the whole Fundamentals of revealed Truth, and often tried with the Lord's hiding of his Face. Besides that, several Temptations pressed me sore, which are of such a Nature that I think it not proper to mention them. And tho' my Enemies gained not their Design, but the Lord was pleased to turn these Temptations for good; nevertheless, these, together with manifold and sore Straitnings accompanying them, concurred to excite heavy Jealousies, lest a withering Wind had been sent forth in the righteous Judgment of a Just and Holy God, to destroy the Seeds from the very Roots, and quite to blast my Hopes of a joyful Harvest, after the sweetest and most alluring Appearances.

Nic. Whatsoever you think, dear Sir, this is no unprecedented Case: Parallel Instances are not wanting in the sacred Oracles. After many Straits and Deliverances, *David saith in his Heart, I shall now perish one Day by the Hand of Saul, 1 Sam. 27. 1.* Many a sad Comparison did blessed *Job* institute:

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betwixt his great Calamities and the happy Days in which the Candle of the Lord shined upon him. Notwithstanding many a gracious Visit, yet *Israel* complains at length; *Our Bones are dried, our Hope is lost, and we are cut off for our Parts, Ezek. xxxvii.*

11. *Is. l. 10.* It is no strange thing for the Child of Light to walk in Darkeness. I might adduce more Instances of this Sort, were it needful; but these may suffice to shew that the Case is not singular.

Phil. This I acknowledge is quieting in so far, and some such Considerations as these have been made useful by the Lord, towards preserving me from sinking in Discouragement, and kept things in some Temper amidst the Throng of Conflicts on this Head, so as to cause me go on in my Way with somewhat of Composure. Notwithstanding I shall take the Freedom to represent, dear and honoured Sir, that since ever the Lord did in any measure open my Eyes, the Desires of my Soul have been strong and ardent, that I might understand and grow in the Knowledge of his Word and the Conduct of his Providence, so far as might tend to his Honour, and for my real and solid Good in Soul and Body: So that the sweet Repose of my Mind hath usually born Proportion, rising and falling according to what Light I had or wanted, in the aforesaid Regards: And forasmuch as several Things are dark and difficult to me in the proposed Case, I humbly crave your Thoughts about it, as it may please the Lord to direct you.

Nic. Your Concern (dear Sir) about understanding the Lord's Word and Way, is just, necessary and laudable. *O Lord, (saith the Psalmist) how great are thy Works! and thy Thoughts are very deep.*

deep. *A brutish Man knoweth not: neither doth a Fool understand this. Ps. xcii. 5, 6.* And such as regard not the Works of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands, he will destroy, and not build them up. *Ps. xxviii. 3.* It is no small piece of profane Atheism, and an accursed Neglect of a Deity, to be regardless of his Disposement, especially in Things more remarkable: And I must say, that (for what I know) there was never more Profanity of this, and all kinds, than in our Day, and under the most conspicuous and clamant Providences. But it is not so with all. *The Lord's Voice crieth to the City, and the Man of Wisdom shall see thy Name: Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it. Mic. vi. 9.* Yet it is requisite that I remind you of some necessary Cautions, which require to be adverted unto for preventing the Degeneracy of this Exercise unto an Extreme. 1. We may not be too peremptory about every thing which concerneth this Enquiry; and when, after all Means used, and a patient Attendance of Light, somewhat still remaineth in the dark, there is no ground for Discouragement, seeing it is most proper, that a due Reserve be kept for the Light of Glory. Then shall a Deity be perfectly known, acknowledged, and honoured, in all the Discoveries which he hath given of himself, when we shall no more *see thro' a Glass darkly*, but shall behold *Face to Face*, and see our Lord *as he is. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 John iii. 2.* Then, and never till then, shall the stately Fabrick of Providence be perfectly viewed in all its Parts and lovely Contexture. In the mean while, it may suffice, that so much is manifested as concerneth Faith and Duty in the necessary Exigences of our
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Work and Warfare, that we may go on therein in the Strength of the Lord, without uneasy Straitnings or Suspence. 2. Neither are we positively to expect, that the Lord will at once discover even that which he will make the Believer assuredly to see in time. *His going forth is prepared as the Morning* in a gradual Increase of Light. *Hos. vi. 2.* We ought not to drive heavily in our Work, because we see not all at once, but, through Grace, to press forward in the sweet Exercise and Confidence of Faith, quietly expecting that what we now understand not, or but little, we shall see in due time. And I have often observed, that the Lord hath given sweet Manifestations of this kind at Times and in Ways, wherein it would not have been expected, that his sovereign, wise and gracious Hand might appear the more eminently in the Disposal, when nothing of that sort was, at the time, looked for. 3. We may not precipitate, but should wait with Patience and without Anxiety. *He that believeth will not make haste. Is. xxviii. 16. John iii. 8.* The Lord's time is best. It is fit that Sovereignty appear even in the most merciful Parts of a providential Disposition.

Phil. The Cautions are seasonable (honoured *Nicon*) and I have sometimes compared Providence to a Book, in which much of the Lord is written by himself, but great Care is to be had of the Reading. The Mistake or Suppression of a Word, yea of a Letter, may greatly alter the Sense; and it were a piece of sottish Presumption and unaccountable Haste, to give our Verdict before the Reading, or when we have read amiss. But to return more closely to our present purpose, I would move a double Inquiry towards the learning somewhat of the

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Glory

Glory of Providence in this Matter.' 1. Which are the more secret and sinful Causes on our part, that procure the forementioned afflicting and surprizing Changes? 2. Wherein doth the Wisdom and Mercy of the Dispensation shine forth, as ordered by the Lord for the Believer's Good?

Nic. Much of the Resolution of these Doubts dependeth upon the divers Circumstances with which the respective Cases are clothed, and the Lord leaveth not himself without a Witness, in giving Light to the exercised Soul with reference to the same in his own Time and Way. *The Heart*, in this, *knoweth its own Sorrow, and a Stranger doth not intermeddle with its Joys*. But to your Query; as to my own Concern, I have had much ground to observe, O that likewise my Soul were humbled before the Lord for the subsequent sinful Causes! 1. Great and unaccountable Ignorance and Rudeness as to the Gospel Covenant, and a way of living and acting in a suitability to the same. I secretly thought and demeaned myself as if I had got a Stock in Hand, and were now put into some Capacity to improve it, and was thus insensibly carried inward. I had indeed been made to see the absolute Necessity of *Jesus*, as *the Lord our Righteousness*; but knew very little of him as our Sanctification: The last *Adam*: The alone quickening Spirit. Hence (a reposing of Confidence upon Grace received from Christ, being a real going off from Christ himself, the only Foundation, and an accursed leaning unto the Arm of Flesh) weak, yea utterly insufficient Props could not but fail, and accordingly afflict with the Disappointment. *In my Prosperity I said, I shall not be moved, &c. Thou didst*

didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled. Jer. xxiii. 6. 1 Cor. i. 130. 1 Cor. xv. 45. 1 Cor. iii. 11. Jer. xvii. 5. Ps. xxx. 6, 7.

Phil. I understand somewhat of this ground; the Covenant of Works was the first, and was made with us all in our first Parents. Hence in our fallen Estate we know no other, nor any way of acting but that which suiteth the scope and tenor of that Covenant: And tho' the happy Translation of elect Sinners into a gracious Estate, by the enlightning their Minds in the Knowledge of Christ, do state them in the Gospel Covenant, and commence their Enjoyment of the distinguishing Blessings thereof; yet much of the old Leaven remaineth, which produceth the foresaid afflicting Changes. *2 Cor. iv. 3. 6. Acts xxvi. 18. Col. i. 13.*

Nic. It is really so; and even these Remains are wholly corrupted as in us: For I doubt not but that the first Covenant required intire Dependance upon God, as our Sovereign Lord and Creator, which also our first Parents observed closely during their original Integrity; and I sincerely judge, that the remitting of this Dependance was the first Infraction of that Integrity. But Matters are worse with us, who, in this corrupt Estate, bend strongly inward without such a Dependance, whether suited unto the first or second Covenant. Proud Nature is mad upon seeking somewhat in, and ascribing something to itself: Which leadeth me to adduce another sinful Ground on our part of the foresaid Trial, *viz. 1. A subtile and secret blessing of ourselves, and sacrificing to our Net, while we truly value ourselves upon our fresh and green Love of Espousals, together*

with the Sweetness, Tenderness, and Circumspection which usually attend the more early Breathing thereof: and hence it is, that we insensibly go a whoring from the Lord, and practically deny him that Honour which is due to him alone, as *our Righteousness and Sanctification*, the only and complete Fountain of Life. How then can it be otherwise, but that our *broken Cisterns* must needs run dry? *Hab. i. 16. Jer. ii. 1, 2. 1 Cor. i. 30. Psalm xxxvi. 9.*

Phil. You bring my Sin to Remembrance, honoured *Nicon*, and I must acknowledge that I was most irregularly in Love with the Sweetness, Tenderness, and sensible Meltings of my Heart, during the Enlargement, and when these lovely Objects were new: And therefore the Surprise was the more amazing, after that all these Floods dried up intirely, and an extreme degree of Deadness and Barrenness succeeded. Yet through a gracious and overruling Conduct, Matters issued well, *viz.* Into a more clear and convincing Discovery (as you well observed) of that detestable Idolatry of seeking a Righteousness of my own, reposing Confidence in it, and laying stress upon it in many subtile Ways: And the Passage was and is convincing, *viz. We are all as an unclean Thing, and all our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags. I count all things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, &c. Is. lxiv. 6. Phil. ii. 7, 8.* Yet all this while Faith was very low, and there were many parts of the Law in me, for one in the Gospel.

Nic. It is indeed so, dear *Philotheus*, and I shall adduce another, *viz.* A third sinful Ground on our part, which influenceth the foresaid afflictive Change,

Change, *viz.* Our weak and shattered Vessels cannot bear much Sail. Unwatchfulness creepeth on insensibly, we weary and think light of the Consolations of God, and keep not due Measures with the Instructions, Warnings and pleasant Motions of his Spirit by the Word, which yet it pleaseth him to bestow and often to renew: *Song* v. 1, 2, 3, &c. *Eph.* iv. 30. *Gal.* ii. 20. And being, as you insinuated, but little acquainted with the alone Gospel Way of Living, *viz.* *By Faith in the Son of God*, and much addicted to the contrary legal Methods, which have not the Promise nor Administration of the Spirit, our Wells run quickly dry; especially for that we are much estranged from that blessed Way of Communication with the living and inexhaustible Fountain, which is only entertained by saving Faith.

Phil. What you say is manifest, and setteth this Purpose in a desirable Evidence of Light. I shall only adventure to add one, *viz.* A Fourth Ground more, which sinfully influenceth this Change on our part, *viz.* That notwithstanding of a very large Measure of these sweet and sensible Flowings of Comfort, and that pleasant Inlargement of Heart in spiritual Duties, we remain much unacquainted with this heavenly Art of Managing our Spiritual Warefare. And hence it is, that, when more vigorously assaulted by our watchful Enemies, and yet more when deceived by their subtle Insinuations, we quickly lose our Ground, and would fall a Prey into their Teeth, did not sovereign and free Mercy seasonably interpose, *If ye live, saith our Lord, after the Flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live,*

live, Rom viii. 13. In this way a Life of Holiness, Rest and Sweetness is enjoyed, and in this manner only. And now, that through the Lord's Blessing, I am instructed and much refreshed by what you have offered on the First, I shall the more chearfully lay before you the second Query, *viz.* How that all this is wisely and mercifully ordered for the Believer's good?

Nic. Some Things to this purpose were touched upon the former; yet for a more distinct Account, I shall, 1. Condescend upon these Advantages, to which the Believer, according to the Measure of his Light, doth with his whole Heart aspire. 2. It will be proper to shew the Subserviency of the Dispensation upon the Lord's part towards all these. And in reference to the first, you know, dear *Philothheus*, that the whole of his Desire is excellently represented by *Judas* (not *Iscaiot*) in that apposite Question which he humbly proposed to the Lord *Jesus*, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the World?* *John xiv. 22.* Here is the dawning of that Day which shall never be turned into Night, a heavenly Light, which shall be preserved, yea amidst all the Believers Tossings shall still be increased in their respective Issues, until it be raised at length unto the meridian Brightness of Glory, beyond all Possibility of future Overclouding. And, besides other Effects of these Manifestations, I take more especial Notice, and, may I say it? my Soul longeth after and delighteth chiefly in these two: An entire and unlimited Resignation unto the Disposition of a sovereign and gracious Lord, without Exception or Reserve: *Do unto us, O Lord, as seemeth good to thee, only save*

us this Day, Judges x. 15. 2 Sam. xv. 26, 25. The proper Place of the Clay, is to ly at the Potter's Feet; and much more is it a Posture becoming Creatures, and absolutely required of them, as necessary for their Well-being, to ly prostrate before a sovereign and gracious Lord, I know of no greater Happiness than to have the Soul wholly of this sweet and blessed Mould. What can disquiet or disturb the sweet Repose of the Mind, in so far as the reintent and replying Principle is broken? *Phil. iv. 6, 7.* In this posture Faith is exercised, and drawn forth in a Suitableness to the several Duties of whatsoever kind, which the Lord requireth of the Person as stated, and the various Exigencies of his respective Cases. Thus he liveth *the Life which he liveth in the Flesh, by Faith in the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20. 2 Pet. i. 5. Gal. v. 6.*

Phil. You have, dear Sir, plainly summed up a truly Christian and Evangelical Temper of Spirit and Way, and I am very much satisfied that the whole of Religion consisteth in the Acknowledgement of a Deity. *This is eternal Life to know, or to acknowledge, thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John xvii. 3.* I have no Difficulty about this, save that my poor, dark and childish Notions fall very much below such high and excellent Things: And though the Foundation be clear and sure beyond what is possible to conceive or express; yet my Hold of, or Settlement upon it, is but weak, and all my Straitnings proceed from myself, being rooted in a power of Darkeness and Unbelief. *Mark ix. 23. Rom. xv. 13. Hebr. xi. 1.* But I would gladly know, how the forementioned sharp and piercing Trials are ordered and over-ruled,

ruled, by the Lord, towards the Believer's solid, spiritual and saving Good, as aforesaid.

Nic. I shall endeavour, dear Sir, to satisfy you, tho' I acknowledge there is much belonging to the purpose, which I have not yet understood: And in order to this, I tender to your more mature Consideration these following Positions: 1. I take it for granted, that Faith is the Mother-Grace, upon which all the others have a sweet Dependence, being exercised, and arising and falling accordingly: As also Temptations are brought down in a lovely proportion, 2 *Pet.* i. 5. *Mark* ix. 23, 24. 2. Hence whatsoever hath, thro' the Lord's Blessing, a tendency unto, and is ordered for the Soul's Establishment in Faith, must needs promote its Advantage in every valuable regard; seeing, as you well know, dear Sir, the whole of the Believer's spiritual Estate dependeth upon the state of Matters with him as to the Life and Vigour of Faith. I know no Improvement without this; and Increase this way is assured Growth towards *the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*, all the Graces of the Spirit being upon their Ascendant accordingly, and every Lust proportionally brought down. 3. It remaineth then to be evinced, that the Conduct of Providence, on the Lord's Part, as to the forementioned Trials, is fitted and made effectual towards the Soul's better Establishment in Believing, which being cleared, this Matter is set some satisfying Light, *Col.* iii. 1, 2, 3, 5, &c. *Matt.* v. 36. *Gal.* v. 6. 2 *Pet.* i. 5, &c.

Phil. I heartily acknowledge that it is so, and have still found the original Defect to ly here, under all my several Strugglings with 'Temptations and Troubles, when once Confusions were removed,
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and the Exercise, may I call it so? was brought to some point. Nothing hath filled me more with Shame, nor doth still more confound me before the Lord, than a low and continuing Infant Estate in this regard; and I am well assured, that our Lord's Challenges with reference to this, do point at me beyond any so stated upon the Face of the Earth, viz. *O ye of little Faith, why did ye doubt? O Fools! and slow of Heart to believe, &c.* And therefore I so much the more intreat, that you would proceed in the designed Account.

Nic. I observe, in the Conduct of Adorable Providence, with reference to the foresaid Trials, these Particulars following, which are, through the divine Blessing, of a kind of native Tendency for training up the Child of Light in a way of Believing. 1. Fair Appearances and specious Probabilities fail him; he cannot *walk by Sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7. Gal. ii. 20. These Props are removed, and no way left open but that of laying full Stress upon the Lord's Word. When Reason, Sense, and every Thing else is at a Stand, no possibility of Subsistence remaineth but only by believing: And seeing the Promise cannot fail, viz. *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Hab. ii. 12, 4. So that the Believer can on that Account, never be left destitute, the Goodness, Mercy, and Faithfulness of God do abundantly secure the Maintenance and Increase of Faith, as without which he cannot live, and so much the more. for that *without Faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. x. 30. and xiii. 5. and xii. 1, 2. 2. By this wise and sinless Dispose-ment of Providence, all the Cisterns fail, and so he must either by Faith apply to the Fountain, or

altogether want, to which Extremity the Lord will not suffer him to be redacted, for as much as he will preserve and nourish that Life of Glory, which he hath planted in the Soul, by an effectual and saving Work of Grace. In this Manner the Lord maketh the Emptiness and Vanity of every Thing, as severed from Christ, to appear clearly. The World faileth, and no wonder of that, *for all Men are Liars*, Rev. iii. 4. The most eminently Godly, when our Expectations arise no higher, must necessarily prove but broken Reeds, *for all Flesh is Grass, and the Glory thereof as the Flower that fadeth*, Is. xl. 6. 1 Pet. i. 24. Gifts and Graces, because leaned unto, do righteously want these Influences from above, which alone can preserve, or render them of any significancy. Sweetness and Tenderneſs of Frame evaniſh, and the more ſenſible and melting Breathings of the Spirit which produced the ſame, are withholden, becauſe of a ſubtile *going a whoring after them*, *Pſalm. xxx. 6, 7.* and the Perſons ſecretly valuing himſelf thereupon. In a word, every Veſſel is found empty, and the poor toſſed Creature is dead, dry, barren, and unfit for every Thing, that ſo he may be taught to believe, and rejoice in the unexhauſtible Fulneſs of the exalted Head, whom the Lord teacheth him, in this Manner, to honour, not only as our *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs*, but likewise as our *Sanctification*, as the *laſt Adam*, the *alone quickening Spirit*, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30. Jer. xxiii. 6. 1 Cor. xv. 45. Thus Faith improveth, while the Believer, finding Vanity written upon every Thing, is brought to know what the Lord is in himſelf, and by acquieſcing ſweetly therein, in that Poſture to await the promiſed Supplies

plies of Light, Life, Strength, and whatsoever else the Covenant of Promise ensureth.

Phil. The Particulars which you have represented, honoured Sir, are solid and clear, and, thro' the Lord's Blessing, do unvail, in a great Measure, divers things that were long dark to me ; yet one thing remaineth, as to which I would gladly be resolved, viz. Gifts, Graces, and every Thing leaned to, as severed from Christ, prove but *an Arm of Flesh*, as you well observed ; and hence it is that they all vanish or fail us, when we repose any Confidence in, or raise our Expectations from them : Yet seeing in this Case the exercised Soul is ready to think or fear, that a withering Wind sent from the Lord, hath utterly blasted, or will quite extinguish all his Hopes of a joyful Harvest, I would gladly know in what Way it pleaseth the Lord to restore him unto the more comfortable Enjoyment and Exercise of these Gifts and Graces which he had thought or feared were entirely lost, and to increase the same.

Nicon. All is restored and recovered again with Increase, but only in a way of Believing, and by degrees, in the respective Issues of the Believer's subsequent Conflicts. The Lord giveth him ordinarily a fair View of the heavenly *Canaan* at his first setting out, and no great Difficulties appear in the Way, while it pleaseth the Lord to dandle and cherish him, during his Infant Estate. But he must not still remain a Child, nor live in uninterrupted Fatherly Embraces ; he hath a Work and Warfare to accomplish, and tho' few Enemies at first appeared, and these were not permitted to push things to any great Length, yet every Step must be debated after

wards. *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, &c. Matth. xi. 12.*

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D I A L O G U E III.

Which containeth an Account of Difficulties and Temptations moved against the main Thesis, from extraordinary Distresses unto which godly Persons are exposed by Straits as to their Provision in Temporals, together with an unusual Measure of Sicknefs and Pain, which sometimes afflict them grievously, and for a long Extent of Time.

Phil. **I** Am sensibly eased, honoured Friend, since our last Conference, and have received Light in divers Things of considerable Weight, which encourageth me the more freely to propose my further Scruples; not that I dare give way to Unbelief, altho', many Things should, as no doubt divers will, remain dark in the adorable Conduct of Providence, while, at best, *we know but in Part, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.* And I may sincerely declare, that my Soul longeth, and even languisheth after some Confidence of Faith, and to be settled, and, may I so term it? to be kept in joint in these two regards; viz. 1. Firmly to believe, and to be above all Hesitation, that *our God is the Rock, and his Work is perfect; and all his Ways are Judgment, Deut. xxxii. 4. Psalm cxi. 3.* And without all Doubtfulness to receive his Testimony, that *he hath done all Things well, Mark vii. 37.* howsoever dark and heavy the Aspect of Providence may be. 2. Not to draw or entertain any sudden or rash Conclusion, or give way unto the least Suggestion which would
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cast a dark Colour upon the Lord's Word or Ways, while Matters continue in suspense, but patiently and quietly to await the breaking forth of the Decree, in an assured Persuasion, that every Thing is ordered by the Lord to his own Glory and for the Good of his Chosen, and that *not one Hair can fall from the Head* of one or other without his Providence, *Rom. viii. 28. and xi. 36. Matth. x. 29, 30. Luke xxiv. 32. Acts vxi. 14.* Nevertheless, my dear and honoured Friend, seeing I am persuaded, that my Faintings and Staggarings assuredly proceed from a great Defect of Light, and are not remedied but by some little gradual Increase of the same, in a further unfolding of the Lord's Word, and a proportioned opening of my Heart to receive it, I adventure to propose my Doubts plainly, fully and with an unhampered Freedom. O may the Lord send forth his *Light* and his *Truth*! *Psalms xliiii. 3.*

Nicon. As to what you represent, dear Philotheus, my Heart echoeth; *Al! how little a Portion of revealed Truth concerning a Deity do we know!* We are but Children, and do think and speak as Children: yet O the Riches and Condescendence of Grace! *1 Cor. xiii. 11, 12.* Our heavenly Father despiseth not the poor, weak, and sinful Babblings of meer Babes, *Matth. xi. 25, 26.* and is pleased for his own Name's Sake, to bless that Mean of mutual Communication, how weak and childish soever the Management may be. Let us have our Eyes only towards him *who maketh the simple wise, Psalm xix. 7. James i. 5, 6.* and graciously vouchsafeth to give Wisdom to them who want it, and through his Grace do ask the same. And now, if you please, you may state the Difficulty. *Phil.*

Phil. I think it will not be needful to spend Time in narrating Matter of Fact on this Head. The complicated Distresses of some who fear the Lord, what by extreme Want as to their Persons, Families, Relations, or others in whom they are interested, together with bodily Sicknefs and Pains, all often concurring in the same Instances, afford such a lugubrious Spectacle of Misery, with Reference unto what appeareth to the Eye, as I really blush to mention. Neither do I think that a particular and close View of Circumstanced Cases is necessary towards the Design of our Communication. Let us presuppose the very worst, either of what we know or may be fairly supposable, and raise the Objections thereupon in the utmost of Force, which the Cunning and Malignity of Temptations can give them. And to this Effect know, dear *Nicon*, that I have found the Pinch mainly reducible to these following Heads. 1. I am straitened about the Beauty and Glory of the Dispensation as before described and circumstanced. 2. I do not well understand the Way of the Believer's Subsistence under such extraordinary Weights, and their consistency with Joy and Peace in a way of Believing. 3. I need Instruction how that all this floweth from everlasting Love, and is useful, yea, necessary for promoting the Believer's solid Advantage, whom it may please the Lord to try with such Afflictions. I would gladly know the Way of being disburdened from such Weights, altho' the Causes should continue.

Nic. You have, I judge, clearly represented the main Strength of real Objections on this Head, which are also not a little heightened and racked thro'

thro' the Subtilty and Furies of Temptation. And now that we design, if the Lord will, to enter into some Disquisition anent these Matters; I would previously remind you of a dangerous Rock which we are with all possible Care and Caution to evite; *viz.* A Hesitating about, or Faintness in our believing Assent to this great Fundamental, That *God is good to Israel, that this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our Guide even unto Death, Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2, &c. xlviii. 14, &c.* merely because of heavy Mysteries in the Conduct of Providence, while its darker Side is nearest.

Phil. You hit exactly right, honoured Sir, and to be free with you, I sincerely acknowledge, that the entire Stress of the Struggle lyeth here. I have still found the Conflict sharp, *viz.* To hold fast that which the Lord hath manifested concerning himself and his everlasting Love, and quietly to wait the Issue without entertaining hard and heavy Thoughts of Providence, notwithstanding the greatest Pinches of Straits, both in Soul and Body, to which godly Persons have been, at once, redacted.

Nicon. Yet remember, dear Friend, that such Temptations are not singular, the greatest of Men have had their Wrestlings, and to a very high Degree, on the same Head, as Scripture records, and a long Track of Experience, according to the Word, cleareth abundantly, *Psalm xxxvii. Jer. xii. 1. Psalm lxxiii.* and to ver. 13, 14, &c. But that we may come more closely to the Matter in hand, it will be proper to lay down some preliminary Hypothesis towards preparing our Way, and then to essay a more close Answer to the proposed Doubts. As to the first, I shall but touch a few, and refer
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you for a more particular Account to a Casuistical Essay published upon the *Lord's Prayer*, viz. The Preliminaries, Question, and Cases on the fourth Petition. I premise then, 1. That we have no Cause to think strange of such a Lot in the World as hath been the Condition of many who fear the Lord, and whose Examples are upon Record in the Word. 'Tis manifestly just and reasonable, that in counting the Cost, we lay our Account with whatsoever the plain Rule bears, in this, and every regard. Poverty is no strange thing in the Word, and hath been the ordinary Estate of Christ's Followers in all Ages of the Christian Church. *Ye see your Calling, Brethren, &c. Hath not God chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, &c. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. James ii. 5. Silver and Gold have I none* (saith the Apostle Peter) *Acts iii. 6. And Paul, amongst his other Labours and Trials, giveth an Account of Hunger, Thirst, Fasting, Cold, and Nakedness, 2 Cor. xi. 27.* But not to insist in a plain Case, you know the Parable concerning the Beggar Lazarus and the rich Man, *Luke xvi. from verse 19.* For tho' it be a Parable, yet the Scope and Meaning is the same as if it were a Narration of express Matter of Fact; viz Besides what may be further intended, that upon the one Hand extreme Misery in all secular Regards, may well consist with an Estate of Favour, Friendship, and Fellowship, with one God in three Persons: And on the other hand, that the most prosperous Estate in the World, which can be imagined, exeemeth none from the just and heavy Wrath of an holy God, and will issue into the most dreadful Surprize of eternal Judgment, to all who live and die out of Christ. 2. It may well suffice

suffice that the Servant be no worse treated than the Master, and that it be with the Disciple as with his Lord: *The Foxes*, said he, *have Holes, and the Birds of the Air Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his Poverty might be rich.* Matt. viii. 20. 2 Cor. viii. 9. Luke viii. 3. Yea, he humbled himself so low, as to be ministered unto from the more abundant Substance of others. Thus it hath pleased our gracious Lord to sanctify and sweeten the sharpest Trials of this kind, by suffering them in his own Person. 3. You know that some excellent Ones, *Hebr. xi. 37. of whom the World was not worthy, have wandered about in Sheeps-skins and Goats skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented.* But I insist not; more of this kind may be observed in our Progress.

Phil. I have had some such Thoughts, and found my Mind quieted, and refreshed by Considerations of that Nature; yet have been tossed by a Temptation on this Head, which it is like you will think strange of, and I know not well how to design it; viz. That although I have been ordinarily brought, in some measure, to understand, and have received tolerable Satisfaction as to many Cases of this Nature, whereof I knew the more particular Circumstances; yet a great number have usually been supposed, and jealous Fears injected about them, which carried Matters to such a maze of confused Perplexity, and unhinged me in such a subtle and insensible manner as I know not well how to express it.

Nic. I perceive what you intend, and have not wanted many Occasions of being too well acquainted with this Fallacy, not only with reference to the

Purpose in hand, but likewise as to the whole Concerns of Religion. Proud Spirits affect mightily to be honoured and feared; and when they can fall upon no new Engine, the fittest part they can act, is, so far as is possible, to possess us with the dull Imaginations, as if a great deal of better and stronger Forces were yet behind, which we shall never be able to withstand. A pretty Conceit indeed; for whether it be so or not, the meer Chimera or Fancy reacheth the End. And to say the Truth, it is no small Advantage to an Adversary, when his imagined Strength affrighteth or dampeth his Antagonist a great deal more than any Effort he ever could reach. The Noise of the Mountains, as travailing in Birth, is terrible, but what's the Product when nothing else cometh forth save a ridiculous Mouse; yet if this Engine hold, our Enemies will never want a fit Handle to keep us in perpetual Fear of these pitiful Bugbears.

Phil. It is so, honoured Sir, and I have often observed, that the more vulgar sort of Papists and other Hereticks shroud themselves ordinarily under this Vail; so that when Light and Conviction are carried home in some measure, and they can no longer resist the Evidence of Truth, being truly self-condemned; *Acts* vi. 10 yet they obstinately hold fast the Heretical or Erroneous Principle, whatsoever it be: *Tit.* iii. 10, 11. And when they can neither adduce any solid Ground for their particular Sentiments, nor answer the solid, clear, and strong Grounds, which are enforced from the Oracles of God against them; yet they hold fast the Delusion on this silly Pretext, That there are who know better things, and could say much to the purpose, though, for their part, they cannot.

Nic. In this respect the Difference is great betwixt Truth and Error, Sin and Duty. Although the Soul be raised to much satisfying Evidence upon strong and invincible Grounds, as to that which the Lord requireth; yet he falleth sadly behind in the Assent, and any bit of Confidence which is attained, lyeth wofully under the Checks of contrary Suggestions, by which many Doubts and Fears are easily excited; whereas our corrupt Minds cleave to that which is sinful, whether in Sentiments or Practices, Heart or Way, even upon the most slender Grounds, yea, hanker and work strongly that way, when no colourable Pretence can be alledged. The one is the way of our own Hearts, but the other is above Nature, and entirely cross to our Natures as now corrupted.

Phil. Notwithstanding, such is my Weakness, dear Sir, that I must acknowledge there are Difficulties in this Matter, which hitherto I have not overcome; and I crave leave to propose them before our entering more closely upon the Matter of this Conference. The whole of that which straiteneth me, is reducible to this one main Scruple, *viz.* That divers who fear the Lord may be so weak, and under such Overcloudings of Darkeness and Confusion, that they can say but little for that which the Lord hath, notwithstanding, taught them; and yet they may not, nor dare quit hold of it; What shall be said in this Case? And must such a Behaviour be condemned as a piece of Obstinacy?

Nic. Your Objection, Sir, is indeed weighty, and requireth to be considered with all the Application we can reach. May our gracious Lord

forth his Light and his Truth. Notwithstanding, there is no such Strength in it as appears at a first and more overly View; and I am hopeful that the Difficulty will be removed upon an impartial Consideration of the following Particulars. 1. That when, and in so far as the Lord manifesteth himself, and discovereth somewhat of his Will, he doth it from the Word, and by an enlightning Work of his Spirit, and hence holdeth forth so much of the Evidence of revealed Truth as satisfieth the Conscience and quieteth the Mind, *Is. lix. 21. John xiv. 16, 17. and xvi. 13.* And although all are not equally qualified for expressing what they are taught, nor have they the same Measure of Light about it, and that Darkeness, in many Things, may be mingled with real and saving Light; yet that which the Lord manifesteth concerning himself, will indeed hold out the closest Scriptural Trial, providing the whole be sincerely and impartially considered by such as understand these Things, and no Advantage taken from such Confusions as attend the more low and infant Estate of Believers, but all due Helps rather afforded towards the drawing out and setting in some order these things which the Lord hath made them, in some Measure, to understand. 2. Seeing Faith in its Nature, Exercise, Joy, Confidence, and whatsoever belongeth to it, is a Fruit of the Lord's Spirit in us, it not only proceedeth upon strong and clear Grounds, but likewise hath an entire Dependence upon these sweet, still, and efficacious Breathings, which give it Life, Vigour and Efficacy: And hence it is, that even the most eminent and best established Believer hath not his Faith, Joy, and Peace, or
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any thing of that Nature at command ; for as *the Wind bloweth where it listeth*, so it is in this Case, which is very far different from the foresaid imperfwadable Obstinacy, and being a Work of the Lord's Spirit, it is quickened or languisheth as these Influences are enjoyed or withholden. Thus Matters rise and fall with the Believer, although I excuse not the sinful Deficiencies on his Part *I was with you*, saith the Apostle, *in Weakness and Fear, and in much Trembling*, 1 Cor. ii. 3. And after he had been *caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable Words*, 2 Cor. xii. 4. yet (especially upon succeeding Temptations) he stood in need of the necessary and seasonable Encouragement, viz. *My Grace*, saith the Lord, *is sufficient for thee, for my Strength is made perfect in Weakness*, &c. 2 Cor. xii. 2, 9. 3. The Believer's holding fast, in this Case, that which the Lord hath taught him, is so far from an obstinate Stiffness, that he rather inclineth unto, and nothing but the omnipotent Power and rich Mercy of God, can keep him off from an Extreme of Distrust and Diffidence, when contrary Temptations assault him, as many notour Scriptural Instances evince, *If* xlix. 14, 15. *Luke* xxiv. 21. *Psalms* lxxiii. 13. and lxxvii. lxxviii. *Prov.* xxviii. 14. *Psalms* xxvi. 2. and cxxxix. 23, 24. And in case this Extreme be happily evited, an holy Fear of Caution is a continued Attendant upon the Lord's teaching, and exciteth to a laying every Thing open to the Search of an all-seeing Eye, humbly and quietly awaiting his Decision as to whatsoever is objected and excepted, or proveth straitening in whatsoever Manner. In a word, it is thus, that Light, Faith, and
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all the Fruits of the same, do grow, and Temptations and Trials whatsoever, prove like the Refiner's Fire. *The Words of the Lord are pure Words: as Silver tried in a Furnace of Earth, Psalm xii. 6.* Our intermingled Dross is purged gradually off, and the Word of the Lord still holdeth to the utmost, and *endureth for ever, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.*

Phil. I am satisfied that this Digression was made, seeing it hath, in the good Providence of the Lord, contributed much to the clearing a Case otherwise difficult, and may be of use, through his Blessing, in the sequel of our Conference: And therefore I intreat, Sir, that you would go on to instruct me in the Particulars proposed. The first, as I remember, was, The Beauty and Glory of the Dispensation, in trusting such as fear the Lord with considerable Wants and Distresses, as before described. I told you, Sir, that I am much straitned, and shall now go on to represent where the Strait more especially lieth. 1. 'Tis plainly declared in the Word, *That Godliness is great Gain, with Contentment* (for so the *Low Dutch* read, according to the native Import of the Words). Gain accompanied with Sweetness and Satisfaction, whereas other empty Semblances of that Sort are clogged with innumerable Loads of Vexation and Anguish. We are also taught that it is *profitable for all Things, as having the Promise of this Life, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8. and v. 6.* The Lord hath clearly promised to *give Grace and Glory, and to withhold no good Thing from them that walk uprightly, Psalm viii. 4, 11.* Now, how to understand the Consistency of all this with the foresaid Distresses, is the main Strait with me; as to which I humbly crave
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Instruction, if so be it may please our gracious Lord to bless this Mean.

Nic. The thing is certain, and we ought to believe it, because the Lord hath said so much, although we should be at a loss, and straitened about the Consistency. The darker side of Providence is usually the nearest, and the blessed Fruits ly hid in the Womb of the Decree until it break forth in due time. *No Chastening seemeth, for the present, joyous but grievous, though afterwards it bringeth forth the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby.* Hebr. xii. 11. Afflictions would be little adapted for the Trial of Faith, if the sweet Ends and enriching Fruits were seen at first: Nay, Patience must have its perfect Work. *Ye have heard of the Patience of Job; and have seen the End of the Lord,* James i. 4. 5. 11. The several Courses of Trial must be finished, and then the blessed Product shall appear from time to time, until the Light of Glory shall dispel every remaining Shadow. In the mean while, it is a very great Iniquity not to take the Lord's own Word upon it until the Effect appear, as Cases are clothed with their particular Circumstances. The God of Truth hath said it, *That Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope, &c.* Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. *and that all things shall work together for the Good of those that love him, and are the called according to his Purpose,* Rom. viii. 28.

Phil. I acknowledge, Sir, that your Remark is most just, proper, and the more seasonable to me, for that it pointeth towards the only way of living suitably to our militant Estate, viz. *By Faith and not by Sight*, wherein I acknowledge my great
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and unparalleled Deficiency. Nevertheless, seeing we are now upon the general *Thesis*, I would gladly have your Thoughts about it, and shall refer Particulars to the respective Cases which require them. *The Heart*, in this, *knoweth its own Bitterness*, and a *Stranger intermeddleth not with his Joy*, *Prov. xiv. 10.*

Nic. Well then, be it so, and may the Lord himself *send forth his Light and his Truth*. Your first (as said is) and third Doubt, viz How these Distresses flow from everlasting Love, and tend towards the Believer's Good, through the divine Blessing, shall be considered together: And for setting the Purpose in a clear Light, I shall, 1. Lay down some *Postulata*, or Concessions, which, I think, will be easily yielded on either Hand And then, 2. Deduce the Matter of your Enquiry by plain and immediate Inferences from them. As to the 1. consider, That the Constitution of our Natures requireth not much towards their Sustenance, and the Lord hath set the necessary Bounds to our exorbitant Desires by the Mould of the fourth Petition, viz. *Give us this Day, or Day by Day, our daily Bread*, *Matth. vi. 11.* compare with *Luke xi. 3.* A little ordinary and wholesome Food, with a decent Covering and Shelter, will both answer the Necessities of Nature, and the Exigencies of a lawful Station with a sweeter Subserviency to the Ends which we should propose, than can be expected from our Excesses. Our blessed Lord and his Apostles, with many choice Saints, lived but a mean Life in the World, as was before observed: And what are we! Or, how dare we presume to complain, if it be so with us! We ought not to
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make either Necessities or Conveniences which the Lord hath not made such.

Phil. I acknowledge this, and it may be easily understood how that many Distresses might have been happily prevented through a wise and humble Conduct in this Matter. The Lord ordereth every thing well, and bestoweth many Blessings, which might be, through Grace, improved to much solid and saving Advantage, did we sedulously ply our Work, and keep within the Bounds which the Lord hath set; but we quickly mismanage and spill our Mercies. But I insist not; you may, if you please, proceed in the Concessions.

Nic. 2. I presuppose that, whatsoever a Person's Station and Circumstances in the World render inaccessible to him, either absolutely or in a Way of Edification, our sovereign Lord inhibiteth him from stretching to that length. And it case in please the Lord, in his just and wise Providence, to lay him yet lower, he thereby requireth that he should adjust his Mind and Behaviour, with every thing else, unto that which the Lord hath made his Lot, humbly, quietly, and sweetly complying with the adorable Disposement of unerring Providence: *Hath not the potter Power over the Clay, &c. Rom. ix. 20, 21. Is. xlv. 9. Jer. xviii. 1, 2, 3, &c.* This, I think, is one native part of the Import of these sweet Words, *I have learned in whatsoever State I am, &c. I know how to abound, &c.* He was well satisfied, and knew how to conform both his Heart and Way unto every Variation of his Lot. *I have coveted, saith he, no Man's Silver, or Gold, or Apparel: Yea, you yourselves know that these Hands have ministered unto my Necessities, and to them that*

were with me, *Phil.* iv. 11, 12, &c. So far he stooped for the Glory of God and the Church's Good, in these unsettled and troublesome Times, that the wicked Exceptions and Cavils of malignant Enemies might be more than sufficiently answered, and their Mouths stopped, altho' the Apostolical Right to an abundant and honourable Maintenance was sufficiently manifest, as the Right of ordinary Teachers likewise is, *Acts* xx. 33, 34. *1 Cor.* iv. 12. *1 Thes.* ii. 9, &c. *2 Thes.* iii. 8. *1 Thes.* ii. 5, 6. *1 Cor.* ix. 3, 4, 5, &c.

Phil. The Heathen Romans had some Sense of this, and instituted a Magistracy with large Power of Inspection and Censure, whom also they designed *Censores*. This Office was reputed, and that justly, very honourable, and was strictly exercised, as you know, during the more established State of that Common-wealth, so manifest was the intrinsic Equity of the thing, and its Conduciveness, yea, and Necessity for the standing of Families and Societies whatsoever. And I humbly judge, that in case of extraordinary Expendings, to which the more opulent Estate of severals may enable and incline them, the very Light of Nature would teach, that this ought to be done, for some public Service and valuable Advantage to their Generation, as they are severally stated, and not to cherish Fleishly Lusts, or to amass Food for the Vanity of the Mind, *Rom.* xiii. 14. *1 Pet.* ii. 11. *Tit.* ii. 11. Proceed now, if you please, to the next Concession.

Nic. I take it then for granted, 3. That though no Man can be profitable to God, *Job* xxii. 2. *Pf.* xvi. 2. yet it is a plain and incontrovertible Duty
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of every one, not to be useless Weights upon the Face of the Earth : And when the sovereign and wise Disposal of Providence rendereth more honourable and advantageous Ways inaccessible, or layeth us lower, so as we cannot reach the more respected and profitable Posts of Work which we before enjoyed ; yet, Health and Strength allowing, we may not trifle away Time idly, but ought, through Grace, to lay out ourselves for the Benefit of our Neighbour, and of the Generation wherein we live, one Way or another : the Rule is clear, *We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are Busy-bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with Quietness they work, and eat their own Bread,* 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12. See the Apostle's own Example, *verse 7, 8. Rom. xii. 11. Prov. x. 4. and xii. 24. and xiii. 4. and xxi. 5. and xxii. 29. and xxvii. 23, &c.*

Phil. This is true and very sweet, and I reckon it no small part of the Character of a truly noble and christian Spirit, to be ambitious for serving others to their Good in all valuable Regards, as it may please the Lord to give us Access, without putting one or other, so far as is possible, to any thing towards us, which they may think uneasy. I confess, that a sort of subtilized Pride may readily intermix itself with all this ; for proud Nature aspi- reth to a kind of Independence, and would have others to depend upon it, so far as can be possibly reached. Nevertheless, as the Duty is plain, Ex- tremes on either Hand being carefully avoided, so the Words of our blessed Jesus enforce it pleasantly, viz. That he said, *It is more blessed to give than*

to receive, *Acts* xx. 35. But go on in the *Postulata*.

Nic. I presuppose then, 4. That when some Failures in the Premises are found in Persons otherwise desirable, and who may have the Image of Christ impressed upon them, we ought not to mistake such Straitenings as proceed from that Fountain, but should impute them to their true Causes, and consider them as fatherly Chastisements for Detection of the Sin, and towards reclaiming of the Sinner. *If they be bound in Fetters, and holden in Cords of Affliction; then he sheweth them their Work and Transgressions that they have exceeded.* *Job* xxxvi. 8, 9.

Phil. I am satisfied that this Concession is just: but ah! the Prevalency of *an evil Heart of Unbelief*, *Heb.* iii. 12. which bringeth many a dark Colour upon Providence, and entertaineth such Temptations as work mightily that way, especially upon soft and distrustful Minds; and in this Manner hard and heavy Thoughts of the Lord insinuate themselves, by which the new Nature is weighted, oppressed and unfitted for Service, by a Sort of spiritual Disjointment: Whereas saving Light is of a sweetning and strengthening Influence, and a pleasant Savour of Heaven is found in right, and therefore high and honourable Thoughts of the Lord, who assuredly doth all Things well for his own Glory, and for the Good of his Chosen. Have you yet, Sir, more Concessions? *Matt.* xxv. 24. *Rom.* xiv. 17 *Deut.* xxxii. 4. *Psa.* cxi. 3. *Mark* vii. 37.

Nic. I shall subjoin but one further, and you may take it in the express Words of the Spirit of the Lord in Scripture, *viz.* 5. That we ought not to take Thought for To-morrow, for the Morrow shall

shall take Thought for the Things of itself: Sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof, Matt. vi. 34. I need not much premise the necessary Caution, *viz.* That a prudent Foresight, with the use of suitable Means for a future Provision, is far from being discharged, either here or in any part of the sacred Oracles. *He that provideth not for his own, especially for them of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel, 1 Tim. v. 8.* An Infidel never had the Faith, and he, for his part, hath denied it. But the great Evil here forbidden, is an anxious Thoughtfulness, and the erecting of Schemes of Providence, hatched betwixt our dark and unbelieving Minds, and the subtle Workings of Temptation upon them, whereby we, at once, inroach upon the Sovereignty, Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness of God, and open the two-leaved Gates to whole Swarms of pinching Temptations, all founded upon that heavy, hard, and invidious Character which we receive and entertain concerning the Lord and his adorable Providence. *The Day, as the Low Dutch have it, hath enough of its own Evil,* why should we burden it with more? 'Tis a most kindly Command and royal Grant of the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, that we may and should satisfy ourselves with a well regulated Concern about the present, referring all future Trials to our gracious Lord, and patiently awaiting their coming forth out of the Womb of the Decree, without taking any other save only scriptural Measures, and without Carefulness even as to these, and taking no Accounts of Providence from our Enemies, or any but the Lord himself, patiently attending until the breaking forth

of the Decree discover the Particulars from time to time, *Luke* 14. from verse 28. *Matt.* xvi. 24. and x. 31. *Mark* viii. 34.

Phil. Your Remark, Sir, is clear and solid, being the plain and native Import of the Scripture Words, and, for my part, I must confess that this Passage is, to me, an awful Remembrancer of Sin, for that many things have had a real and lamentable Influence upon my dark, unbelieving and unhumbléd Mind, which yet never had nor shall have a Being in effect, although the very Imagination drew forth a great deal of Unbelief, with Fears, Faintings, Fretfulness and other Fruits of the same. In this manner do the Powers of Darkness play their Game upon our darkened Minds, by teeming forth many Bugbears (shall I so call them?) to the great Dishonour of Providence, and the cramming of our Minds with the infernal Vermin of much vexatious Anguish. How sweet is the Prescript of the pleasant and only foresaid Rule in opposition to this, *Mic.* vii. 7, 8, 9. *Lam.* iii from verse 21. *Psf.* xl. 1, 2. &c. Now I would gladly hear your Inferences, for resolving me as to the proposed Difficulties, being abundantly satisfied as to the Validity of the premised Grounds.

Nic. In order to this, I shall again remind you of the Conclusion to be evinced, *viz.* That there is a Glory and Beauty in the Believer's Temporal Straits in Body or outward Estate, as flowing from everlasting Love, and ordered for his Good: And with reference to this you may consider the following plain and easy particulars; 1. That a State of worldly Enjoyments, fitted for and adjusted to the Exercise and Trial of Faith, and blessed towards Improvement

in it, and consequently in all the Graces of the Spirit, ought not to be suspected, but rather the Wisdom and Mercy of the Providence in disposing Things so, should be believed and honoured. Our *heavenly Father knoweth what is meet* for us, and dispenseth the Enjoyments of this Life accordingly. I told you, that our blessed Lord sanctified a low Condition in the World, by humbling himself to endure it. The Apostles, and diverse of the most eminent Saints who ever breathed, have been straitened in the like Manner. Faith is cherished and strengthened in Spirituals by a sovereign, wise and sinless Disposement in carrying Straits to an Extremity, and then commanding the most proper Deliverances. The whole Thread of the Believer's Work and Warfare maketh out this, and every Individual of the Cloud of Witnesses is a several Instance of it : And shall we entertain the least Suspicious of gracious Providence for giving our secular Concerns the like Turn ?

Phil. I judge that the Terms wherein the Petition runs, will lead us to this, viz. *Give us this Day, or Day by Day, our daily Bread.* If we have it from Day to Day, and enjoy Bread in that manner, although upon the one Day, we should not know of Food for the next, there is nothing in all this which agreeth not with the Word and Mould of the Petition, nor any Thing strange in the Lord's putting us to depend upon him by Faith and Prayer from Day to Day, and the merciful Returns do so much the more sweeten the Mind in the strong Persuasion of the Gain of Godliness.

Nic. It is so ; but I proceed, and represent, 2.
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That Straits, which flow from our satisfying of Lusts, and feeding the Vanity of the Mind, or stretching ourselves beyond that which the Lord requireth in a Suitableness to what he hath allowed us of the Goods of this Life, ought not to prove Stumbling to any, being the native Product of such Mis-carriages as procure and influence them : Far less should we be moved with these which are the Product of a slothful and unprofitable Life. It is fit that *Drowsiness clothe the Sluggard with Rags, Prov. xxiii. 21.* And the Spirit of the Lord is express by the Apostle, When we were with you, saith he, *this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat, 2 Thes. iii. 10.* No wonder then that his Sloth straiten him. And as to what concerneth such as fear the Lord, of whom only we now speak, as I shall be very loath to impute the Reign of these Evils, *Rom. vi. 14.* or of any Sin unto them, so I have good ground to assert with reference unto whatsoever may be amiss amongst them in the forementioned Regards, that there is a Congruity, yea even a Beauty in the Lord's bringing them into such Difficulties, and to such a Degree as he will make effectual for humbling, and thus restoring them in due Time.

Phil. You remind me, Sir, of several Things of this sort, which have been a little mysterious and uneasy to me in the Conduct of some, whom yet I greatly love and honour. But various Circumstances do much alter the respective Cases, which are clothed by them, and I tremble to judge rashly. *To him that is afflicted, Pity should be shewed from his Friend, Job vi. 14.* And Inadvertencies about the Management of secular Things should not be too narrowly scan-

scanned, in these who are under heavy Weights as to Matters of a far higher Import. The Rule is clear and sweet, viz. *Bear ye one anothers Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ, Gal. vi. 2.*

Nic. I am satisfied with your Remark, and yield my chearful Assent to the divine Prescript in this; only I must say it, that I could wish for more Tractableness in some who fear the Lord, on these Heads and in other Things also. I honour the Image of Christ wheresoever I see it, but must bemoan it, that faintish Discouragements, and more grievous Eruptions of Pride and Humour, or the Fears of so much, procure such Restraints as render some, otherwise desirable Persons, mutually inaccessible, or at best very uneasy to treat with one another, through the sad remains of Pride on either Hand. And, in the mean while, a wicked World taketh all possible Advantage, and asperseth Religion itself with Things really blame-worthy, or which they think censurable in the Behaviour of these who are in Repute for Godliness. The Passage is very observable; viz. *In the Multitude of Counsellors there is Safety, Prov. xi. 14.* It is beyond all doubt that we ought to look above all Creatures: *Cursed be the Man that trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, Jer. xvii. 5.* Nevertheless seeing the *Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, Ps. xxv. 14.* I shall on this occasion acquaint you, that I have found it indeed the Lord's Way, and greatly to advantage, to concert Matters of Weight, both as to Spiritual and Temporal Concerns, with Judicious and Godly Persons, of whose intimate Friendship I had the advantage. *He who believeth will not make haste, but pondereth, in so far, every*

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step, waiting for Light from the Lord in such ways and by the means which it may please him to bless for that effect. And as I am well assured, so I have found that the forementioned is one amongst others, to which also the Communion which ought to have place among Saints doth natively lead, and the mutual Help, which they owe to one another, as Members of one Body, requireth a Concern of that nature. And sure it is no strange thing for Children of the same Heavenly Father to be *of one Heart and Soul*, and to carry in one another's Matters before the Lord. *Rom. xii. 10. 15, 16. Hebr. xiii. 3. Gal. vi. 2.* In this way I have found a merciful Conduct, and was the more deeply affected with the Ruins which I observed to flow from unadvised Selfwilledness, Haste and Temerity, whereof some Strains in Persons, otherwise truly gracious, were the more afflicting.

Phil. I have also had my own Share, and that both large and deep, of Troubles in this kind. And as to my own Guilt, I am filled with Shame before the Lord, and do leave my poor Testimony, may I say so far? for the Lord, and against myself in that regard. Nevertheless, it pleased the Lord to pity and pardon for his Name's Sake, and from time to time to disentangle a poor, empty and confused Creature. I am strongly persuaded of my utter Insufficiency for every Thing, and therefore dare not intrust myself with, or look upon myself as having Ability to manage the least Matter which belongeth to my Station, either as to secular or spiritual Concerns. Hence I must have my Eyes only towards the Lord, and in this Way it hath pleased him to help hitherto. I am much more grieved for
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the Difficulties of others, which in some Cases that I know, are so great, that the utmost I can venture to say, with reference to them, is, viz. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptation*, 2 Pet. ii. 9. And yet even in these I have had occasion to observe much of Mercy and Condescension in a gracious Preservation and seasonable Relief, when the Distresses were near to an Extremity. But, if you please, after this Digression you may proceed in the Inferences.

Nic. Consider then, 3. That as many Straits might be prevented, or may be conveniently relieved by keeping due Measures and a prudent Management as aforesaid; so there is no Shadow of Ground for thinking harshly of the Lord's Way from the straitened worldly Condition of diverse who fear him; but upon the contrary, we have clear and solid Grounds to admire the Beauty of the Dispensation in the Lord's continuing thereby the Necessity and Occasions for doing Good and Communicating, as Sacrifices *with which he is well pleased*, Heb. xiii. 16. And thus, as to gracious Persons, all Shadow of Difficulty is removed, when upon the one hand, Grace is exercised in the giving of that which is meet, and, on the other, by a receiving what is necessary (while other Means of Subsistence cannot be reached) and improving it with the utmost Care and Frugality for needful Uses. And even the Necessities of human Nature in the wicked and indigent, are often bountifully, yea sometimes marvellously supplied by *the God of the Spirits of all Flesh, who preserveth Man, yea, and the Beasts also*. Ps. xxxvi. 6. *Matt. v. 44, 45.*

Phil. You have satisfied me in a great Part, and my Soul blesteth the Lord for Light bestowed by this Mean; and therefore I shall the more freely propose my remaining Difficulties. You may remember, Sir, that I told you, I was straitned about the Way of the Believer's Subsistence under extraordinary bodily Wants, and the Consistency of these Wants with Joy and Peace in a Way of Believing; and what may be the Lord's way in taking off the heavy Weights from their Minds: notwithstanding the Continuance of these Straits and Intanglements. And now suffer me, dear Sir, to open up my very Heart, in a close and particular Enarration of the Pinch of these Difficulties, may I so express it in my Rudeness? I acknowledge in so doing I cannot escape to discover a great Deal of unaccountable Weakness, and a shameful Power of Unbelief: But, through Grace, I would not stand to take Shame to myself before the whole World, if so be it might tend to the Glory of God, and prove a Mean towards the more thorough and effectual Cure. And, for my part, I must needs premise, that the Lord, for his own Name's Sake, hath mercifully ordered my Lot, so that I have been free both from *Poverty and Riches, and have been fed with Food convenient for me, Prov. xxx. 7, 8, 9.* And little Difficulties in this Sort which affected either our Family, or my Person, and mine, were seasonably discovered in such a Manner as discovered much of the Lord in the Deliverances, *Psalms* xliv. 4. and cxi 5. and xxxiii. 19. The Difficulties concern others chiefly, and affect presupposed Cases large as much as these which are real, in so far as any such have come to my Knowledge,
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and I reduce the Strength of the Temptation on the Head, as I have found it, chiefly unto these two Particulars. 1. The most deplorable, desolate, and destitute Condition of this Kind was represented in all the black and dismal Colours which Hell itself could put upon it, and the real Straits of some worthy Persons dreadfully agreed in this Manner. 2. Hereupon heavy Suspicions were injected about the *Gain of Godliness, as having the Promise of this Life and of that which is to come.* And whither such Suggestions tended, I need not mention; you know the Case, *and are not ignorant of Satan's Devices, 2 Cor. ii. 11.*

Nic. I understand what you intend, and give me leave to tell you, dear Friend, that all this Bustle is but a mean and empty Stratagem of evil Spirits, whereby they impose upon our darkened and simple Minds by a piece of silly Sophistry. And in order to a Detection of this, and preventing the like Effects in Time coming, I shall lay before you some Rules of Conduct with reference to Temptations in this Sort, which also will, thro' the Lord's Blessing, closely reach the proposed Difficulties, seeing all the Believer's Straits, as to a Life of Joy and Peace, proceed from his Darkeness and Mistakes about the Lord and his Way.

Phil. I have no Doubt about this, and the Main, yea even the Substance of all that I desire, as to this and every other Case, is Light. That known Passage have been sometimes very sweet to me on on this Head, *O send out thy Light and thy Truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy Hill and to thy Tabernacles; Then will I go unto the Altar of God, unto God my exceeding Joy, &c. Ps.*

xliii. 3. The Particular which I observe as to the Purpose in Hand, is, That the Way of Light is the assured Way to Joy in any Case, as opening a Door of Access unto the Lord. *Then will I go unto the Altar of God, unto God my exceeding Joy:* And in some Prospect of this, but only of free Mercy thro' Christ, I shall, thro' Grace, receive Instruction from you.

Nic. Let your Eyes be only towards the Lord. I represent then the following Particulars. 1. We are not to allow our Enemies an exorbitant Liberty of supposing Cases, and, in that Manner, putting us upon a Kind of Rack for resolving them. Our sovereign and gracious Lord hath wisely determined all that shall come, or shall not come to pass, in the eternal Decree, and every Thing shall be accordingly ordered in the Course of adorable Providence, without which not one Hair shall fall to the Ground; and seeing *he worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will*, and that *his Counsel*, in every Thing, *must stand, and he will do all his pleasure*, as the Scriptures largely declare, and all the reformed Churches believe and profess, *Matt. x. 29, 30. Eph. i. 11. Ps. xxxiii. 11. Prov. xix. 22. Isaiah xlii. 10.* our insolent Enemies are not to be allowed so much as a hearing of their presumptuous Suppositions. Besides that the Ground of all is but a pitiful and dull Fallacy; for you know that *posito quolibet sequitur quidlibet*; If they will needs object, let them be compelled to do it fairly, and to condescend upon some particular and real Case, clothed with its distinguishing Circumstances, which being unknown, ought, if needful, to be enquired into, before the Matter be taken into Consi-

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deration. And if, after all, the necessary Circumstances continue hid, or that Providence rendereth the Knowledge of them inaccessible, we are to leave the Matter there, and not to suffer a Thing unknown to be Matter of real and settled Exercise.

Phil. I am satisfied with this Rule, and have nothing to except, save that *an evil Heart of Unbelief* returneth natively unto its old and wicked Biass, and the exact Suitedness of the most exquisite Temptations unto its native and strong Inclinations, could not fail to have prodigiously dismal Effects, and even very quickly, did not sovereign and free Mercy seasonably prevent.

Nic. 2. As we have many undoubted and encouraging Instances of a tender and fatherly Care, which our gracious Lord sheweth forth towards his Children, in preserving them under and relieving from their Distresses of all Kinds, which Examples are so many and manifest, that I need not condescend upon Particulars, assuredly the Believer's whole Life, and in particular of such whose Distresses are greater than ordinary, is a continued and current Proof of this, so we ought not to forego the Benefit which such a *Cloud of Witnesses* affordeth towards the Confirmation of our Faith. And I must say it, that the Treatment is most iniquous, viz. So to pore upon and inveigle ourselves with a few more difficult Cases, whereof we understand not the secret Springs, nor even the very essential Constituents, as to lose the Marrow and Sweetness, and to rob God of the Glory of so many alluring Instances of his fatherly Compassion, which pass all reckoning.

Phil. I acknowledge and desire to be humbled
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before the Lord for much Guilt of this Sort, and am persuaded that the Fountain of all is an abominable Propensity to *live by Sight*, whereas we ought to *live by Faith*, *Pf. ciii. 13, 14. John iv. 9, 10. Psalm cvii. Heb. xi. 2 Cor. v. 7.* But ah! the Bias is strong on the Side of Unbelief, since the first great Breach was made in that Manner: Yet this obstinate Arch-enemy, upon whom all the rest depend, shall be at length extinguished entirely, tho' in a Way of Fighting it out to the utmost, *Matt. xi. 12. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.* But proceed, if you will, in the Rules.

Nic. 3. Let us, in a peculiar manner and beyond all things, through Grace hold fast the subsequent Cluster of plain Truths, which I shall succinctly represent in a very few Words. 1. Every Part, to the minutest Circumstance, of the Believer's Lot is ordered from everlasting Love, and by a tender and compassionate Fatherly Providence. Their sharpest, strongest and most abiding Afflictions, are really but Fatherly Chastisements mercifully inflicted, and ordered to the Glory of God and for good to the exercised Soul, which shall be seen, when *the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness* are thereby brought forth; and while the Vessel is continued in the Furnace, a Father's Hand is still at it, and therefore it shall not be consumed, but bettered in the Issue of the Believer's respective Trials, until the final and compleat Victory commence an eternal Triumph. *Pf. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33. Jer. xxx. 10, 11. Hebr. xii. 11. Prov. iii. 11, 12. Rev. iii. 19. Job v. 17, 18.* 2. No state of Matters can, or ever shall be so low, as to surpass an easy Recovery by an Omnipotent Power. 'Tis meet
Atheism

Atheism to entertain the least Doubtfulness about the Accomplishment of any one Jot or Tittle of the Lord's Word, from a preceeding low Estate of Souls, Bodies, Churches, or whatsoever the Case be. Can there be any thing lower than Death itself, *or dry Bones scattered about the Grave's Mouth?* Ezek. xxxvii. 11. Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20. Numb. xi.

4. And yet even *these shall live* at the Command of the Lord of Life. It is then, at best, unaccountable Weakness really and practically to say, *Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness?* 3. The Way of Humiliation is the assured Way to the best of Deliverances in due time. The Lord hath made the Connexion in this Case, and nothing can break it. Right and comfortable Deliverances cannot be enjoyed otherwise; and in this manner, they shall not fail. Till things work this way, the kindly Turn is not yet come, as to Souls or Churches. But when Matters are brought to this, no Power shall hinder the advance of the Deliverance. Levit. xxvi. 41. 43. 1 Pet. v. 5, 6. Ja. iv. 10.

Phil. I understand the Scope of your Remarks, and we need not deduce the particular Inferences for adjusting them to my proposed Scruples; yet one Difficulty remaineth, about which I have had my own Shakings; viz. The Fears lest godly Persons, who ordinarily are but low in the World, should be left to utter Indigence in Case of common and desolating Strokes.

Nic. We may know what the Lord's Care of them hath been in Times past, and that he hath hitherto helped, and doth help. And as to what is yet future, let it suffice that they are in the Lord's Hand, who will command the most proper Deli-

verances, and in all these Ways make himself known, which is the *All* that we can desire, 2 *Cor.* i. 10. *Psalms* xlv. 4. *John* xvii. 3. 6. *Psalms* xxvii. 4, &c.

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D I A L O G U E IV.

Which accounteth for the Opposition made against the principal Thesis, from the Uncertainties at which several Believers are long kept about their gracious Estate: wherein likewise, an Essay is made to discover the secret Springs and the sure Remedy of this Evil.

Phil. **T**HE Success of our last Communing, dear and honoured Sir, encourageth me to proceed in opening up the Secrets of my Heart about whatsoever hath been or continueth to be straitening to me, with reference to the Lord's Way towards his Children: And seeing divers, who fear the Lord, are at great Uncertainties as to a gracious and saving Change, and Matters have been long so stated with me, if I may crowd in amongst the Number, I am in a strait how to reconcile fore and long continued Shakings in this regard, with the Bowels of everlasting Love. I sincerely acknowledge, that all this is only the sad Fruit of much sinful Weakness on my part; yet I hope you'll bear with me: And as it hath pleased the Lord heretofore to bless this plain and sweet Mean of mutual and free Communication; so I hope it may please him, for his own Name's Sake, yet further to bless it.

Nic.

Nic. I would think, dear Sir, that, in the general, there is no great Difficulty about a doctrinal Reconciliation of all this with the Goodness, Mercy, and Faithfulness of God, tho' our darkened Minds are hardly brought up to a believing Reception of plain Truth in that and every thing. For the evincing of this, I tender you the following Considerations in a few Words: 1. Our thorough deserving of Hell and Wrath for every Sin, should render the very least Glances of everlasting Love matter of sweet Wonder and Gratitude unto us. The *Canaanitish* Woman is a notable Instance of this, who, under a humble Sense of her meriting the Designation of a Dog, prized the least Crumb which might fall from the Childrens Table, at an high and just Rate, *Matt. xv. 22. Gen. xxxii. 10. I am not worthy of the least of all thy Mercies; or, I am less than the least of thy Mercies*, saith the humbled Soul, more especially with reference to Blessings of this Sort. 2. Wise and gracious Sovereignty should quiet us. *Is it not lawful for our Sovereign Lord to do with his own* whatsoever seemeth good unto him? *Matt. xx. 15. The Wind bloweth where it listeth, John iii. 8.* 3. Whatsoever we may suffer in this Kind, is ten thousand thousand-fold thoroughly deserved on our part, and righteously inflicted, as the just Procurement of our rebelling and vexing the Holy Spirit of God, *Eph. iv. 30. 1 Thes. v. 19. Isaiah lxiii 9, 10.* And seeing this Ruin is visibly under our own Hands, we have no Shadow of Ground to complain, or to think hardly of the Dispensation on the Lord's Part. 4. As the Lord ordereth wisely his manifesting of himself, as to Time, Measure, and whatsoever concerneth the

same; so every further Degree of Light will more than compensate all the preceeding Vexation and Care, though the Sin will still remain Matter of Shame and Sorrow. *Hope deferred doth indeed sicken the Heart, but the Desire coming is as a Tree of Life. A Woman, when she is Travail, hath Sorrow, because her Hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the Child, she remembereth no more the Anguish, &c. John xvi. 21.*

Phil. These and such like weighty Grounds ought, I acknowledge, to prove satisfying; and I cannot deny, honoured Sir, but that they are of a composing Influence in some measure: Yet I would gladly have the very Roots of this Malady detected, how deep and latent soever they may be. And for as much as our former Conferences have not wanted their Usefulness in this manner, I adventure the more freely to propose my humble and earnest Desire that you would allow me some Instruction on this Head, and so much the rather, because some things in the present circumstanced Case and Time, do in a peculiar manner require so much. The solemn Ordinance of the Lord's Supper is shortly to be celebrated in the Neighbourhood, and I cannot but reckon it a Piece of unaccountable Profanity, under the Light of the Gospel, to adventure upon the Seal without somewhat of Light, more or less, about the special, saving and distinguishing Blessings which are sealed.

Nic. You speak truly, and I see not how it is possible to communicate in Faith without some View, more or less, and somewhat to sway the Balance, though I acknowledge it may be often little, with Reference to a gracious and saving Change,

Change, seeing the Ordinance is, in its Nature, confirming, and such as presupposeth a converting Work. But of this more may be seen in the founder kind of Sacramental Tracts. Be pleased now to propose distinctly that which you desire to be resolved about, but with an Eye only towards the Lord, who alone can *send forth his Light and Truth* to the effectual Conveyance and Sealing of our Instruction.

Phil. Presupposing then a gracious Estate, and some View of it, however dark and uncertain it may have been, whence is it that this cometh to be lost, or that divers who fear the Lord never reach any tolerable Measure of it, at least, not for a long time, and till after many and great Strugglings?

Nic. I have had much occasion of Concern about this Case, and yet am straitened how to digest and express that which hath been often upon my Heart with respect to it. Notwithstanding, I shall essay, in dependence upon our gracious Lord, who sweetly and powerfully instructeth *the Way-faring Man, though otherwise a Fool*; and for this effect, I represent, *imo.* That the original Want as to both, lyeth in Humiliation, which, though real, yet is low and indistinct in divers who yet have the Root of the Matter in them.

Phil. I have not wanted my own Suspicions of this, yea, have been in some Measure persuaded that it is so indeed, but I desiderate a more distinct understanding how, and on what Grounds it is thus with the poor tossed Soul on that Head.

Nic. Consider the following Particulars for clearing this Matter, as it may please the Lord to send forth his Light, *imo.* It is the Way of the Lord, and

and the only Way held forth in the Word for attaining Light, and the Way wherein it pleaseth him to convey it, *viz.* First, to humble, quiet and meeken the Soul, under his sovereign and wise Disposal; and, in this manner, to manifest more of himself, and further to open the Eyes. Thus the stormy Wind and Earthquake make away to the sweet and still Voice. *The Meek will our gracious Lord guide in Judgment, and the Meek will he teach his Way. Psalm xxv. 9.* Such as ask Wisdom of the Lord are Persons who lack it, and are sensible of the Want, *James i. 5.* And, in one word, it is the plain, scriptural, and by all discerning Persons, acknowledged Gospel-Method, that the Lord humbleth first, and then exalteth *in due time*: remembering thus *his Covenant with Jacob, with Isaac, and with Abraham, Levit. xxvi. 41—43.* as might be cleared and evinced at length, were it the present Purpose. I only now represent, that our Want of Light, in the foresaid respect, and every other way, is to be imputed to much Defect in this Ground-work.

Phil. I think I understand your Meaning, our Lord is a Sovereign Lord, and will not manifest himself and his everlasting Love in any other Way than such as is adjusted to display his Sovereignty in all the Expressions of his free Mercy. Proud Nature would really, and upon the matter, plead for some what as due, and therefore repineth under the Want as if we thereby suffered Wrong; but we must know, that we hold the smallest Crumb, or least Drop of Water, only of free Gift, and much more doth sovereign Freedom shine forth in the bestowing of such Blessings as accompany Salvation. *He hath Merc.*

Mercy on whom he will have Mercy. Of him, and through him, and to him are all Things, &c. Rom. ix. 15. Exod. xxxiii. 19. Rom. xi. 36.

Nic. We are satisfied then, I hope, that there is no Ground to mistake or think strange of the Dispensation, as ordered by the Lord. Light, Comfort, and *every good Gift proceedeth from the Father of Lights*, but only in his own way; and to expect these Blessings in any other, were really to give the Lie unto the God of Truth. And this at once discovereth the Remedy in so far; we cannot, nor may we presume to command Light. The only proper and prescribed Course is humbly to beg and patiently to wait for it. *James i. 5. Ps. xl. 1, 2, &c.* A contrary Temper of Spirit is quite cross to the Thing, while as in this Method, it shall not be wanting, but assuredly bestowed by the Lord in due Time: We wonder not that bodily Diseases are further rooted, and increase by a wrong Method of Cure; and shall we expect Light and Comfort in Ways directly contrary to those, wherein the Lord hath said he will bestow them? Here is the lovely Order and golden Chain of Heaven's Blessings. *1mo.* The Lord manifesteth himself as our sovereign Lord; *Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay? &c. Rom. ix. 20. Isa. xlv. 9. Jer. xviii. 1, &c. Rom. vi. 23. Exod. v. 2. Psalm xii. 3, &c.* *2do,* He displayeth his Justice and Holiness with the righteous and heavy Demerit of every Sin, as striking at the very Being of a Deity, while the Sinner intrudeth upon, and by the very Act of Sin as such, arrogateth to himself the Dignity of a Godhead, by making himself his own Lord and Lawgiver. *3tio.*
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This stoppeth the Sinner's Mouth, and quieteth him in the humble Acknowledgement of a just and equal Disposition, whatsoever Strokes the righteous Judge of all the Earth may inflict; yet intreating humbly, that he would graciously manifest himself, so as he doth *not* manifest himself *unto the World*. Rom. iii. 19. Judges x. 15. John xiv. 21. 22. 4to. In this Way the Lord who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness shineth into the Heart. Faith springeth from this Root, and according to the Vigour of its Exercise, the Evidence, Confidence, Fruitfulness and Comfort of the same do grow. This is the ordinary divine Dispensation; what the Lord may do, and how far it may please him to hide himself in extraordinary Cases, I shall not take upon me to determine. It sufficeth for my Purpose to remind you in the express Words of Scripture, *That the high and lofty One who inhabiteth Eternity, and whose Name is Holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy Place, dwelleth also with him that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, &c.* Isaiah lvii. 15, 66 1, 2, &c. And as Light, Life and Enlargement cannot fail in this Way (for the Lord dwelleth in the Humble for this very effect, *viz. to revive the Spirit of the Humble, &c.*) So the Causes of Want are not obscure, in so far as the Defect is found in this Ground-work.

Phil. I am refreshed with this Account, and find it further clearing and confirming as to several Things, whereof I had some Thoughts before this but mingled with a great Deal of Darkness and Confusion: When there is a Weakness and Failure
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(whatsoever it be, and much more when there is a total Want) in the Foundation, it is a vain Attempt to help it in the Superstructure, without adverting to the Ground Work. Errors, you know, in the first Concoction, are not helped in the following : But I pray you proceed to a further Elucidation of this material Head.

Nic. I observe then, *2do*, That this Uncertainty (where yet the Root of the Matter is) deriveth its Rise and Increase, from a proportioned Ignorance of, and doctrinal or practical Mistakes about the Gospel Covenant, which procure a secret, and often a subtle Mingling of the two Covenants. This of which we are communing, and other Blessings, flow in upon the Soul through the Channel, may I so term it, of the Covenant of Grace, and by no other ; and hence, in so far as that Covenant is little understood, it cannot escape, but that the Soul must be accordingly straitened in that regard, seeing the Enjoyment of these Blessings in a Way of Believing, must needs suit the Soul's Rootedness in that Covenant, or rather in him *who was given as a Covenant to the People, a Leader and Commander unto them, Isaiah* xlii. 6. xlix. 8. lv. 4. *1 Cor.* iii. 10, 11.

Phil. I believe the thing ; it is assuredly true, but mysterious, and I would gladly understand the more particular Way of Influence, which our Ignorance of that Covenant hath upon the bemoaned Uncertainty and Fleetings from thence proceeding ; I observe both in myself and others a strong and woful Bias towards the Covenant of Works, even after some pleasant Irradiations of the Mind by the Glory of Christ. *Nevertheless, the Secret of the Lord is*
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with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant ; or (as the Words run more closely to the Original, and are so read by the Low Dutch). “ His Covenant is with them, namely to make it,” *viz.* That Covenant known unto them; which strengtheneth me with encouraging Hopes, that the meanest Degree of Knowledge of this sweet Mystery shall not be lost, and that the Lord will discover more and more of his Secret in this Sort, which I truly think comprehendeth all Religion, to every elect Person.

Nic. I shall be glad that we mutually assist one another, in pressing after Light on this Head, but with our Eyes wholly towards that *mighty One, upon whom alone Help is laid, Psalm lxxxix. 19.* And in Expectation of so much, I shall begin to unfold the little I have hitherto understood. *imo,* Our uncertain Fleetings proceed from Ignorance as aforesaid, for that our proud Minds are easily tossed hither and thither, according to the various Aspect of Appearances, and as we find the Disposition of our Spirits spiritual and lively, or dark and deadened. Not that I think light of these sinful Disorders in Heart and Way; it were unaccountable Profanity not to be deeply concerned, and earnestly desirous of effectual Relief, by the pulling up of the most hidden Roots of the Malady; yet the Conclusion in this Case, dependeth not on such variable Premises, for who can enumerate the several Turns and Tossings, Ups and Downs, may I so call them, in the Course of our spiritual Warfare? Hath the Lord in any measure graciously manifested himself and his everlasting Love? nothing followeth in Prejudice of this, from the Believer's being out of Frame, and
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much under the Feet of Lusts and Temptations (although our Sinfulness in Heart and Way, be Matter of Shame or Sorrow) for *He is God, and changeth not, and whom he loveth he loveth to the end*, Mal iii. 6. *John* xiii. 1, 2. *Rom.* xi. 29. *Phil.* i. 4. *Psalms* cxxxviii. 8, &c. *His Gifts and Calling are without Repentance*, as the Word declareth largely, and needeth not to be specified in this Manner: But the naked Truth is, that our Faith of the Lord's Testimony, is at best, but very low; our Grips in this regard, are but weak; we lean for a great part to other Props, and therefore we sadly find our own Weight, when these fail us, as they assuredly will, for *other Foundation can no Man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ*; but for the true Knowledge of him, and the firm Belief of his Testimony, ah what a Rarity are they!

Phil. I really judge we quite invert the Argument in this Case; for we reason, for example, I am under such and such spiritual Indispositions, my Heart playeth me often the Slip, and there are many Things unaccountable in my Way, yea, former Enemies revive, and old Sores bleed afresh; and, because of such Spots, I cannot look upon myself as among the Children: whereas (still presupposing a gracious and saving Change) the Strength of the Argument is wholly upon the contrary Side, *viz.* The Lord hath begun to *manifest himself so as he doth not manifest himself unto the World*, the Day is dawning, and therefore his Faithfulness and free Mercy will secure the Progress. *His going forth is prepared as the Morning*; he will carry on, and at length, complete his own Work. Hence, tho' the Life of God be ex-

ceeding weak, and Lufts strong, especially when drawn forth, and quickened by fuitable Temptations, yea, tho' Matters continue long behind, and former Enemies recover, &c. there is no Cause to despond, though they come in as a Flood, the Spirit of the Lord will at length, and in the most proper Season, *lift up a Standard*, for the Lord is a wise Builder, and will not leave his own Work imperfect, but will put the Cope-Stone upon it, *Isaiah lix. 21. 1 Pet. i. 5. John x. 27, 28. Psalm xxiii. 6, &c.*

Nic. I am satisfied and refreshed, dear Sir, that you have observed this, and it bringeth to my Remembrance a notable Fallacy which procureth manifold Staggarings, after some Dawnings of saving Light, and belongeth to this Head, as deriving its Strength and Success from much Ignorance of the Gospel-Covenant, *viz. 2do*, That after some Sweetness of Assent unto the Testimony of Jesus, and *setting the Seal to it*, in some Measure, *that God is true*, which would certainly be further verified by the distinguishing Fruits in due Time; yet, because, for the Time, we cannot perceive them, we lose the weak Grips which we had, from an anxious Solicitude about the Thing, much like to some foolish Gardeners, who, when they presently see not any desirable Indications of Fruit in the ingrafted Branch, or that its first Birth is but small, and such as they cannot make any account of, would therefore pull it out, and thus by pulling it out, and putting in again and again, would render it altogether useless, if left to such a foolish Conduct. Faith, you know, is the Mother Grace, and beyond all doubt, a sweet Assent unto what
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the Lord Jesus hath manifested concerning himself, is at least, a main Constituent of it, *John* iii. 23. *Mark* v. 36. *John* iii. 33. *Isaiah* vii. 9. and seeing there is no other way of living, acting and advancing all the Graces of the Spirit being set on Work thus by the Influences of Heaven, and Lusts brought down proportionally) every Thing must needs fade and languish, in so far as we quit hold of any Manifestation, which our gracious Lord is pleased to vouchsafe: It is utterly impossible to reach the Fruits but by *abiding in the true Vine*, and deriving Sap and Virtue from thence, *2 Pet.* i. 5, 6, 7, &c. *John* xv. 1, 2, 3, &c.

Phil. That which you represent is a Truth, I confess, and of very great Weight, yet I am straitned about divers Particulars relating to it, which yet do all centre in one main Objection, which I shall take the Freedom to propose with Candour and Plainness, *viz.* That the Particulars which you have represented contain a sad *Dilemma*, and bring the exercised Soul to a strait on either Hand; for as upon the one, the Duty is clear and material, namely, to hold fast whatsoever the Lord hath manifested concerning himself less or more; so upon the other, the Strait is no less pinching, *viz.* To go on in some Firmness of Assent where yet Light is, in a great part, wanting. Now here is my Difficulty, honoured Sir, I acknowledge the strong and sweet Tie to receive the Lord's Testimony in every Thing, and yet am so much in the dark as to the State of Matters with me, that I know not what to determine. By what Thread then shall I be brought out of this Labyrinth?

Nic. Your Exception hath a great appearance of
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Subtilty and Strength; yet, upon a nearer View, you will find that it reacheth not the present Case, for the primary Object of Faith is not any Concern of ours, but the Lord's Testimony concerning himself; and though Matters continue much in the dark with us, both as to our State and Way; yet the great Mystery of Redemption, both by Price and Power, is still the same, and nothing which the Spirit of God hath declared about the Glory of Christ can suffer any change. *Psal.* lxxvii. 10, 11, 12. *Isa.* l. 10. Here is then solid and sweet Matter of Faith, even in the darkest Hour: And this discovereth another secret Cause of much Uncertainty, and many fleetings about a gracious Estate, together with the Cure of the same: *viz.* 3^{tho}. An Inversion of the true Order, wherein we are required to look out for, and may, but only of free Mercy, expect the Lord's conveying satisfying Light, unto the Soul as to its State and Way, *viz.* His manifesting himself in his Glory and Beauty; and in this manner, drawing forth the Heart of the lost and self-condemned Sinner, and so shewing him, by Degrees as seemeth good in his sight, both what, and where he is. This is a pleasant and native Method, the reflex Acts of Faith flow from, and follow upon the more direct and clearer believing Views of the King in this Beauty, do gradually raise the Soul to a saying, and sealing this ravishing Truth, *viz.* *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.* *Song* vi. 3. And as Light is thus conveyed in the Entrance and Ground-work, so it is preserved and increased in like manner, nearer Approaches to him who is *the Light of the World*, and the Increase of the *Light* of the *Knowledge of his Glory*, setteth all that be-
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longeth to Life and Godliness, for Time and Eternity, in a proportionally satisfying Evidence of sweet and clear Light. Now we invert the Method, and are readily never forward to read our Evidences, than when the Hour is darkeſt with us. Upon the whole, the ſure and true Remedy is, through Grace, ſtill to hold faſt the Lord's Teſtimony concerning himſelf, and what he is in himſelf; and thus, in his Strength, to go on in a way of Adherence, humbly attending upon the Lord for reflexive Evidence, as it ſhall pleaſe him, of his ſovereign and free Mercy, to vouchſafe it.

Phil I perceive your Deſign, *viz.* That although the New Creature hath its diſtinguiſhing Marks and Characters, and the Image of Chriſt, imprinted upon the Soul by a converting Work, ſhall never be deleted; yet ſeeing all this may be often wholly, or much out of ſight, and Faith alſo at a low Ebb, as to its Aſſent unto the Lord's Teſtimony concerning himſelf; the proper way of Recovery is not an anxious Solitude immediately and at firſt to read theſe Evidences, which cannot be judged practicable in the dark, but under the Influence of Heaven to eſſay a Believing the plain Truth of whatſoever the Lord hath manifeſted concerning himſelf, and his everlaſting Love, and as Faith is in this manner revived and ſtrengthened, ſo the Lord's Work will be accordingly ſet in a true and clear Light, in that which further belongeth unto it, and the Believer reſreſhed and ſtrengthened with the pleaſant Views of that which the Lord hath freely given him, unleſs it pleaſe our wiſe and gracious God, for his further Humiliation and better Eſtabliſhment, to keep him in the Miſt for a while. 1 *Cor.* ii. 12. *Rom.* x. 9, 10. 1 *John* iii. 23. *Nic.*

Nic. You have rightly understood my Meaning, and I further adduce this plain Reason for Confirmation, *viz.* That we cannot expect to prevail against our Enemies, by yeilding them any bit of our Ground. It is our Lord's great Commandment, that we believe his Testimony; and hence it were a preposterous and foolish Course to expect a Sealing Work of his Spirit, by yielding to the Enemy the Faith of his Word. Shall we thus *make God a Liar* by Unbelief, 1 *John* v. 10. and yet expect that he'll countenance the Work, by enabling us to read our Evidences? nay, this must not be so; sweet and clear is the Order, *viz.* *In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of Promise.* *Eph.* i. 13. 1 *John* iii. 33

Phil. I am satisfied with your last Remark; the Lord grant that I may understand it better, and find more of the Power in an experimental way. Now suffer me, honoured Sir, to propose my further Scruples, though I must confess, that the Discoveries of a great deal of sinful Weakness, in this manner, cover me with Blushes. It hath often, at once, surpris'd and afflicted me to find Doubtfulness increased, and my poor weak Faith never more to stagger, than at such times and under these Means, which I thought would have proved chiefly confirming. Far be it from me to disparage that which the Lord hath, or may manifest concerning himself at sealing Ordinances; yet ah! that I must say, that these Seasons have, of all others, frequently been the heaviest to me, and my Soul weighted, wasted and weakened under the free and large Offers of Christ which abound at these Occasions, and according to which they are generally valued by the

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bulk of professing People, yea, and divers of very great Note; and among other humbling Singularities in my Case, must needs this be one, *viz.* That the most enlivening Means and Occasions should strike me dead!

Nic. You are not, dear Sir, so singular in this as you fear; I can say the like, and perhaps more, for my part; but with all due and tender Regard unto these, whom the Lord hath taught; neither do I question the Integrity of some, whose Endeavours in this, I yet heartily could wish, were tempered with some more of Caution: I hope, dear Friend, you will not mistake me, for I sincerely declare, it is merely from the Consciousness of a wicked Bias in my own Heart, that I am, may I say it, jealous of others, *with a Godly Jealousy*, divers of whom I greatly respect and honour.

Phil. I beseech you then, help me to the Bottom of this intricate Business, as it may please the Lord to direct and furnish, and let me have some account of that Temper, or these Cautions, which you judge necessary towards the right stating and qualifying of Gospel Offers, seeing it is beyond all manner of Doubt on either hand, that the Tendering of these Offers is a special and sweet Part of the Ministerial Work. *We are Ambassadors*, saith the Apostle, *for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,* 2 Cor. v. 20.

Nic. In order to this, I premise two *Postulata*, or Concessions, about which there will be no Difference betwixt us, as there is none, in Point of Doctrine, amongst reformed Protestant Divines. *1mo.* That as children of the first *Adam*, our native,

corrupt, and strong Bias is to turn inward. Our first Parents, and we in them, had once the Happiness of an intire Dependance upon God Creator, inlay'd with our very Natures, before that our original Beauty was defaced; and as the flacking thereof was the first Infraction of that spotless Integrity, so now, our entire and wicked Propensity is inward, we having turned wholly off from the Lord, and in to self and the Creature. See the History and compare *Gen* iii. 1, 2, 3. &c. *2 Cor.* xi. 2, 3. *Jer.* xvii. 5, 6. *Exod.* xix. 8. *Deut.* v. 27. *Mat.* xviii. 26. *Hab.* i. 16. &c. *2do.* That our Sin and Danger of turning inward, is in nothing greater than with reference to Faith: The choicest things are most readily, and, let me say it, most dangerously mistaken; mere Counterfeits have a fair Shew, and do frequently exceed the most precious Jewels in a sort of glittering and splendid Appearance. It is not Faith, but an adulterated Work of the Law, which we spin, as it were, out of our own Bowels, *Pf* xliii. 3. *John* xiv. 21, 22. You know, dear Friend, this pleasant Truth which the whole Stream and Tenor of the Gospel beareth, viz. That no acceptable Outgoing of the Heart to the Lord shall, or can ever have place, but such as is the Fruit of his manifesting himself unto the Soul, and that *the Power of God, the exceeding Greatness of his Power, the Workings of his mighty Power, even that Power, which raised Christ from the dead,* *Eph.* i. 19, 20. are put forth towards them that believe.

Phil. We are agreed as to these Particulars which I reckon among the plain, and First Gospel Principles, and which no Persons, whose Eyes the Lord

Lord hath opened, can, or dare deny; though yet, I must acknowledge, they are litt'e understood and considered by many in our Day. Let me next hear what Superstructure you raise upon this Foundation, for instructing how Gospel Offers ought to be qualified, according to Gospel Revelation contained in the Scriptures.

Nic. The plain Testimony of the Lord's Spirit in the Word, and the Nature of the thing, direct these following Qualifications, *imo.* The utter Impossibility of knowing the Lord Jesus, without a supernatural, and specially enlightening Work, ought to be conscientiously and carefully inculcated, seeing not only the Conviction of Sin, but also of Righteousness, is a special Work of Power and Mercy wrought by the Spirit. You know that *if this Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, and that it remaineth hid until God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, shine into the Heart.* Nothing less than a creating Work removeth this Vail.

Phil. I understand the Necessity of this Caution, for there is nothing more general, and, I may say, more fatal than a Presumption of Knowledge: We take our common Notions for good Coin, although the Power of Darkness remain untouched; and yet there is nothing more evident in the World, than that an unknown Christ cannot be believed in. *He who hath heard and learned of the Father, sayeth our Lord Jesus, cometh unto me; John vi. 44, 45,* neither can he come except he be efficaciously drawn. But proceed, if you please, to further Cautions.

Nic. I represent then, *2do.* That, though it be
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the Duty of all, without exception, to believe the Lord's Testimony held forth to them in the Gospel, and to fly in to Christ, there revealed, for Life, Salvation, and all that belongeth unto the same; yet none will, nor is any fitted to do so, save they who are lost, that is, sensible of their quite undone and ruined Estate: *Mat. ix. 12. 18. 11. Luke xix. 10.* Not that the wretched Sinner can contribute any thing to this, or that it hath, to a discerning Eye, even the least Semblance of a Price, but this is the only way wherein our gracious Lord draweth forth self-destroying and self-condemned Sinners to himself our only Redeemer; the one and other being wrought by him alone; And, seeing this is so, assuredly, so much ought to be signified in the Tendering of this Salvation, that none may have the occasion to feed upon Ashes, and to *enter-tain any Lie in their Right Hand. Isa. xlv. 20*

Phil. You well observe this, and two Things convince me strongly of the Necessity of the Caution (now that I hear it from you) *imo*, The mighty Aversion of secure and soft Nature, from deep and home Wounds; we like them not in the Body, and yet far less in the Soul: It is uneasy to childish, perverse and timid Creatures to have them ripped, searched, and kept open in the Body, although so much be absolutely necessary, as without which they cannot be rightly cured; and the like, or worse Madness possesseth us in our spiritual and eternal Concerns: We like not Wounds, or, if touched, in some Measure, the Pain smarteth, and we easily listen to false Expedients for Ease, and thus the Wound closeth with all the Venom in it; and it is much, if afterward it prove not utterly incurable.

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Hence, it is dreadful and dangerous in this, to daub with untempered Mortar; you know how awfully this Wickedness is taxed in false Teachers, *Jer.* vi. 8, 9 :o. *2do* The Forwardness of our self conceited Hearts to presume, and to raise a Fabrick upon the Sand, by spinning out a sort of Faith from our own Bowels, under some more common Flashings on the Mind and Affections, while yet the native Darkeness and Heart-atheism continue regnant, *Eph.* ii. 12. *Acts* xxvi. 28. But have you, dear Sir, any further Restrictions?

Nic. I might add more, but am loth to be prolix, and think it not proper to deface the excellent Observes of great Men upon the Head, by putting them into my poor Drefs. I shall then conclude with this one Remark, *3tio*, That seeing all the Powers of Darkeness without and within us, are to the utmost set against true and saving Faith; *that Faith* cannot be of the right Stamp, which is attained in any other Manner, but by an enlightening, enlivening, and determining Power, satisfying the Mind, and surmounting these Difficulties in some Measure, *Psalms* cx. 2, 3. The poor tossed Creature cometh indeed sweetly and willingly out from its former *Egypt*, yet only by the Revelation of the Arm of God, *bringing him forth with a strong Hand*, *Isaiah* liii. 1. *Song* i. 4.

Phil. I accept thankfully of the Information which you have given me, and do reverence the good Hand of God in the Conduct of this Matter: And now that we have dipt so far, and somewhat was insinuated with reference to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, whereof there have been several occasions about this time. I take the Opportunity of impart-

imparting freely unto you divers Things, with reference to which I have been not a little straitned at these Seasons. And while I am essaying this, my Heart trembleth lest I think or speak amiss, or fasten an undue Imputation upon any who fear the Lord, Ministers or others ; nay, let the Edge of just Indignation be blunted upon my own Heart, as to whatsoever is blameable in me, and what I know not, may the good Lord teach me.

Nic. Fear not, dear Sir, but speak your Mind without the least Hesitation ; we have so much Knowledge of one another, that I hope, through Grace, there shall be no danger of Mistake on either hand.

Phil. I much wonder that some worthy Ministers whom I greatly honour, and tenderly love in the Bowels of our Lord Jesus, should press People to communicate without that Caution, and these important Restrictions, which I believe, are necessary in the Case. You know, Sir, that a distinct Sound is required at all times, and especially in the weighty Concerns of a distinguishing and sealing Ordinance. The uncertain Sound of a Trumpet may readily be fatal in War, seeing, according to the Sound and the Distinction of Sounds, the Soldiers move, and *if the Trumpet give an uncertain Sound, who shall prepare himself to the Battle?* 1 Cor. xiv. 8.

Nic. I must acknowledge that there is too good ground for your Remark, but let not things be carried too far, especially in a time, wherein the Spirits of many are rankled, and prone to a degenerating into unwarrantable Extremes on every occasion. And therefore, though I differ not from you,
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yet I would tender to your Consideration a few Particulars, that so far as is possible, we may take things by the best handle; the Duty is weighty and sweet, *viz.* of *shewing forth the Lord's Death till he come*, and undoubtedly it beareth just and great Weight in the Consciences of those who are exercised to Godliness, and must be pleasant to them according to their Measure of Light and Life; and hence, a just Resentment of undue Neglect on the Part of the Lord's Children, as well as the utter Unfittedness of others, may, and hath hurried desirable Persons beyond proper Bounds in an ill cautioned Pressing of this pleasant Duty; which yet should be understood so as to take in the necessary Preparation, and I have often heard so much mentioned in express Terms, although I also confess that there is much amiss in this Respect.

Phil. I likewise desire not to mistake any who fear the Lord, yet I must say, that some things in the Conduct of this Matter have sometimes wounded me, especially when attending occasions of that Nature, and I hope you will suffer me to mention them with all dutiful regard unto the *Ambassadors of Christ*, and any who bear his Image. *imo.* I have much desiderated this necessary Warning, *viz.* That no Preparation either can have Place, or be of avail towards the right Participation, while still the Person continueth in a natural Estate. I need not tell you, Sir, that the dead are not capable to eat, and that there is no other way to eat but by Faith, without which we *eat unworthily*, and therefore *eat and drink Judgment to ourselves*, yea, *are guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*: All this is plain, being express, almost *in terminis*, in the known

Context of the Institution. Hence *2do*. Some piece of moral Seriousness about the time of the Celebration, whereof often, but little is found, proveth a Snare to many, who thereupon imagine that they do well in partaking, or partake aright, though undoubtedly remaining in black Nature, notwithstanding of all this; and if I may take upon me to say so far, I fear that the Hurry which frequently attendeth these Seasons hath, among other things, its own Influence upon Unadvisedness with reference to this, so much of time being frequently taken up in public Exercises, as hardly can allow Leisure or Opportunity for Retirement, which also is the more difficult, because of the great Cowards that usually attend these Solemnities. *3tio*. To be free with you, dear Sir, I tremble at the too native Effect of such Exhortations, which I have, with great heaviness, observed to be dismal in a threefold Regard, *1mo*. A Multitude rusheth upon that distinguishing and sealing Ordinance, who yet are destitute of the very least Shadow of Religion, if we set aside some little transient Flashings amongst them about that time. *Mat.* xxi. 8, 9. *Psf.* lxxviii. 34. &c. *2do*. Some who afterwards perceive their Error, are thrown into deep, and sometimes desperate Anguish, as having rendered themselves guilty of the most atrocious of Crimes, even of the Body and Blood of the Lord: And I know the Case, though when nothing of Encouragement could take the least Place in this Strait; this at length gave a little Allay, *viz.* *I did it ignorantly, in Unbelief*. *1 Tim.* i. 13. How dangerous then must the Want of due Warning be? *3tio*. These vehement Proceedings prove rather discouraging to the more judicious

ous and godly, who know that nothing but Light from the Lord can justly determine in this Case, and while straitened in many Concerns of this Nature, as also from what they apprehend of a promiscuous Admission; these ill cautioned Pressings have a considerable Influence on keeping some of them back, instead of clearing their Way.

Nic. I doubt not but that there is too good Ground for what you say; yet I tender to your Consideration for Allay in this Case, that some worthy Ministers take the greater Liberty, from the Fears they are under lest they should decline to the Extreme of Independentism in this Business; and tho' an ecclesiastical or judicial Seclusion be not allowed, save upon Grounds which may support a Sentence of that Nature; yet they reckon it some Stretch in the Overseers of the Church to enquire into the State of spiritual Matters with Communicants, providing they be otherwise knowing, without Scandal, and morally serious. This they judge to be our Principle as Presbyterians, in Opposition to the Sentiments of our congregational Brethren upon the Head.

Phil. I pretend not to understand, nor to have perused that which is alledged upon either hand, and therefore shall not adventure to say much; only I crave leave, with all dutiful Respect unto worthy Ministers, humbly to represent, that they are Watchmen, and therefore, upon the highest Peril, obliged to give Warning, *Ezek. iii.* from 17. xxxiii from 7. And if any adventure ignorantly or wickedly upon the Seals, who is not yet instated into the Gospel Covenant, and that thro' Neglect on the Teacher's Part, they need not me for a Monitor

of the Danger, 1 Cor. i. 2. Rom. i. 7. Eph. i. 1. Phil. i. 1. Col. i. 2. 1 Thes. i. 1, 2. ii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 2. ii. 2. i. 1. Acts xx. 28. I acknowledge that Churches never were, nor, I believe, ever will be constituted merely and only of Saints, in this militant Estate; yet I sincerely think, that in the apostolical and elder Times, Church Members generally, or for a great part, had a probable Appearance of being godly, otherwise, the Designations given to the whole Body of the respective Churches in the sacred Oracles, would have had but a slender Foundation, *viz. Sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints, beloved of God, faithful in Christ Jesus, faithful Brethren in Christ, Churches in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, which he hath purchased with his Blood.* I owe all due Regard unto these worthy Men, who yet are of different Sentiments upon the Head, and though I intend not to enter the Lists of Debate with great Men, and shall, thro' Grace, chearfully receive Instruction and Conviction wheresoever I need it; yet when I am brought to ponder the Matter seriously and gravely as before the Lord, I cannot think that some Smatterings of Knowledge, with Freedom from known and open Scandal, give sufficient Ground for such Designations. I sincerely think, that Scripture Expressions ought not to be narrowed, but should be taken in that Fulness of Significancy, which the Force of the Words, as connected, doth require, and is agreeable to the Analogy of Faith; and therefore I cannot think *that* to be the true Sense of Scripture, which sinketh far below the plain and native Import of the Words.

Nic. But what intend you, dear Sir, by all this?
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Would you impeach the Constitution of our Church, and of other reformed Churches? where will this land at length? I do indeed acknowledge that the Degeneracy of all the Churches is great, and that we are much remote from that Virgin Estate, which was their Beauty in the apostolical, primitive, and purer Times. Neither is the circumstanced Case the same now, which then it was; and with all becoming Deference to faithful Ministers in our Day, I observe a two-fold Difference. *1mo*, The awful Strokes which at that Time reached some that dealt deceitfully in the Lord's Matters, whether as to their Reception into the Communion of the Church or other Things, impressed the generality of professing People with strong and just Fears of the Effects and Consequences, in Case they should juggle in these Matters; the Apostles and primitive Teachers having been eagle eyed, and the Lord with them as to his gracious Presence and Conduct in a very eminent Degree, *Acts* v. 5. x. 11, 13. *2do*, Motives from the Consideration of secular Things were ordinarily wanting in these Times; yea, usually such as associated themselves unto the christian Church, had visible Grounds to lay their Account with the utmost Efforts of the Rage and Malice of Devils and their Instruments, as to *cruel Mockings*, Reproaches and violent Persecutions in all Kinds, *Heb.* xi. 35, 36, 37. *Matt.* v. 10, 11, 12. *1 Pet.* iii. 14. iv. 14. *Heb.* xi. *p. t.* *Matt.* xvi. 24. *Mark* viii. 34. *Matt.* x. 38. seeing, as is known, the christian Church wanted a christian Magistracy for a long Time, and was rarely, and not long free from Persecution, by *Jews* first, and afterwards by diverse Heathenish Emperors

and their Substitutes. We ought indeed, to lay our Account with so much at all Times; yet that Period was attended with a continued Track of Persecution, at best, but seldom, and not long intermitted; which assuredly prevented or hindered the Thronging in of Crowds: whereas a more prosperous Estate in succeeding Times, was quickly abused to a very profane and lamentable Mixture; besides, that external Advantages and a quiet Lot afford many Motives and Handles for Dissimulation, which have no Place amidst the scorching Flames of Persecution. All this, I confess, ought to come under a due Consideration, and Parallels should not be instituted rashly; I likewise acknowledge that we have receded much from the blessed and authentic Pattern as to diverse Things belonging to the Management of Church Matters. But will you, dear Sir, adventure to impeach the Constitution of the reformed Protestant Churches, and of our own Mother Church?

Phil. I have no such Design, but do sincerely love and honour the Churches of Christ, and that to which I belong; nevertheless I advance nothing contrary to this just regard, when I say, that in other things, and particularly as to Church Membership, the reformed Churches stand in Need of further Reformation, and Matters should be brought to a greater Closeness unto the only Rule. O! may this be the Desire of the Souls of many, *What we know not, Lord, teach us; and whereinssoever we have done Iniquity, let us do so no more, Job xxxiv. 31, 32.*

Nic. I intreat you, dear Friend, explain yourself, for I shall not conceal, that I am jealous over you

you, I hope, with a godly Jealousy, lest in any Thing you recede from our received Presbyterian Principles, and let me have your Judgment, candidly and fairly, as to what you think to be the necessary Requisites of a Church Member, who hath right to Church Privileges, and in particular, to this distinguishing and sealing Ordinance.

Phil. I distinguish betwixt that which is necessary to constitute a Church Member *in foro soli*, or amongst Men, so as to render him unexceptionable, and to open his Access to this distinguishing and sealing Ordinance in so far as that he cannot be legally secluded: And that which is needful to satisfy the Conscience upon solid Grounds before the Lord, about his Call and Warrant to partake. As to the first, I think Knowledge of the Principles of Religion, together with some Diligence in the use of the instituted Means of Grace, and an Attendance upon the Lord in public, Family, and secret Worship; as also, a Conversation for what appeareth, both in these, and otherwise, serious and sober. This I think, is matter of necessary Inquiry to be made by the Overseers of the respective Congregations, as on other Heads, so, in a peculiar Manner, with respect to this Ordinance; and I fear not to aver, that Persons exceptionable in the foresaid Respects, are liable to an ecclesiastical Seclusion, in case they should desire to participate, and ought to be secluded, as the Nature, Degree, and Evidence of the foresaid Offences doth require; neither may Ministers or Elders trifle in these Matters, but ought to demean themselves as becometh *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. For the Second, I have seen this treated in the
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sacramental Remarks, which were printed *Ann* 1706, in a Letter to a Friend, and all issueth into this, in a Word, *viz.* That seeing it is in its Nature a confirming, and not a converting Ordinance; and a gracious Estate is presupposed in the worthy Partaker, as the renowned Mr *Gillespy* and other sound Divines have cleared at great length; it is necessary that the Communicant have some Light, more or less, anent his gracious Estate, that he may be satisfied in his own Mind about his Call and Warrant from the Lord, 1 *Cor.* xi. 28, 29. ii 13. 5, &c.

Nic. I am satisfied with this Account, and you and I agree in so far; only I bemoan it, that different Sentiments, and a several Conduct of godly Persons in these, and the like Matters, procureth ordinarily much unwarrantable Alienation on either hand; and thus all due Measures are broken, each maintaining his own Sentiments and Conduct, with the greater Peremptoriness; whereas a christian Jointness of Heart, Counsels and Endeavours, might be a blessed Mean for Reformation of many Evils, which not only they who fear the Lord, but even sober and discreet Persons do generally acknowledge to be such.

Phil. My Heart trembleth at the carrying Matters to extremes, especially as to these things, about which gracious Persons may have diverse Sentiments; yet I cannot think that I have adopted any singular Opinion with reference to this Ordinance, seeing, for what I know, it is commonly taken for granted, amongst exercised Souls every where, that they who are in a natural Estate have not the Lord's Call nor Warrant to communicate, while remain-
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ing in the same. And hence it is to them, a native Concern, I speak as to the new Nature, with respect to this Ordinance, to search and wait for Light about their converted Estate, as without which, in less or more, they dare not entertain the least Thought of going to the Lord's Table: I remember that worthy Mr *Durham*, speaking of the Hypocrite, as to the present purpose, hath these express Words, *viz. He hath not Right before God to come.* Exposition of the Commands, Pag. in my Copy 67. and Page 55. *We come not to the Sacrament properly to enter into Covenant with God, but first the Covenant is entered, and then the Seal is added, &c.* Do we not all agree, that it is the Children's Table, and that Dogs may not presume? We know that unregenerate Persons are ordinarily debarred with great Solemnity, when the Table is fenced; you and I have often heard, and been refreshed with this. Nevertheless, though I have ingenuously told you my positive Judgment, I shall not conceal that which is excepted, or objected upon the contrary, so far as I can possibly see, or have ever heard, without any reserve; and would gladly have your Thoughts, being ardently desirous of more Light about a Matter of such great Weight.

Nic. Let me then hear the Objections, that we may commune freely about them, with all dutiful regard to such as fear the Lord, and tender the Concerns of his Honour, although some Differences may remain as to Sentiments and Conduct, while we know but in part, *Phil. iii. 15. 1 Cor. xiii. 10.*

Phil. 1mo. It is alledged, that a Celebration, so restricted as foresaid, is not practicable in our present Circumstances, that it would procure Tumult and
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Confusion; that the great end of Edification could not be reached in this manner, but that Matters would rather run to a worse Account; and a mutual Alienation betwixt Ministers, and their respective Congregations, could not be escaped; upon which, and the like Accounts, it is thought that such a limited Administration could not be for Edification, especially in the present State of this Church. The Stream is too strong that it should be advisable for us to enter in upon it, and set ourselves against it. Thus I have fairly represented the Objection in all the Strength I can see it to have, and earnestly desire your Thoughts upon it.

Nic. With all due Regard unto such as sincerely desire and endeavour to know, and walk in right Paths, I answer, *imo.* That the whole Argument proceedeth upon a wrong Ground; we have a Rule and Institution, according to which the Ordinance of Christ must be squared in every thing; and assuredly it is our safety, as well as our duty, to keep close to it, *Prov. x. 9. Psal. cxxv. 5.* This, and this only should give the Measure. It is sinful, and dangerous Snare, to decide the Case as to Sin and Duty, from what we apprehend of Effects and Consequences; and at once, reflecteth upon the Institutions of Christ as unsafe, and his Ways as unequal. *2do.* Nothing is pleaded in this Case, but that which is most close to the very Letter of the Rule, and yet fairly practicable; if we resolve, through Grace, not to please the Corruptions of one or other, but *by Manifestation of the Truth, to approve ourselves unto the Consciences of all Men. 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2.* No judicial Seclusion is pleaded, save upon Grounds which may support it, and can be instructed; and

what can be excepted against solemn and faithful, private and personal Warning, when no more can be reached; and as I sincerely think, that in this manner, the Overseers may be exonerated before the Lord, so I understand not how they can find Peace in the Omission. *3tio.* Let us not confound Edification with Ease and Conveniency as to the Flesh, nor reckon that unedifying which may expose us to Trouble, though it were to Persecution in the very highest Degree, when there is no other Topick from whence to infer it; you know the absolute Necessity of the *cutting off a right Hand, and putting out a right Eye, and that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution.* *Mat. v. 29, 30. xviii. 8. Mark ix. 47. 2 Tim. iii. 12.* All this is trying, but cannot be reckoned unedifying on that Head. And if we bring the Point of Edification to the true Touch-stone, we must not regard the pleasing of a Multitude, or gratifying the Humours and Corruptions of Men, whether high or low, but take our Measures from the Word, and have a special Eye to the Conscience, as rightly informed according to it; and sure the offending of the Majesty of God, and giving of Offence to any of Christ's little Ones, by a greater Latitude in that distinguishing Ordinance than the Lord alloweth, will never be found to Edification, howsoever it may be pleasing to the Flesh: *Mat. xviii. 6. 7. Luke xvii. 1, 2.* Awful are the Woes which God hath pronounced against those, by whom Offences come, and I need not remind you of the tender Regard which our Lord hath, even to his little Ones. I desire to think and speak soberly, as before him; yet cannot conceal my heavy Impressions of these

external Advantages, howsoever great they be, which are founded upon offensive Courses in this Matter, while the Hearts of many judicious and godly Persons, who yet abhor Extremes, are soaked with secret Griefs, from that which they observe of an undue Latitude on this head. *4to.* As to the alledged fears of Alienation betwixt Pastors and People, &c. Let it be considered, *1mo* That Wisdom, Faithfulness and Courage in a Management more close to the Institution, would cement the hearts of the Godly, both Pastors and People, more nearly and sweetly than I can mention; whereas, on this Head, amongst others, severals keep up an unwarrantable Distance, and many are sore afflicted altho' they keep all due Measures in Point of Church Communion. *2do.* Such a Conduct would prove convincing *to them that are without*, through the Lord's Blessing Endeavours to retrieve a greater Purity of Management suitable to the Institution and though the Corruptions of wicked Men might readily be stirred, yet who knoweth what Check their Consciences, and God, who is greater than the Conscience, might put upon the more open Eruptions of the same, and the faithful *Reprover hath afterward found more Favour than he who flattereth with his Lips.* *3tio.* It is no valid Ground to exeeem from plain and incontrovertible Duty, for us cowardly and sluggishly to alledge, that a Lion and Boar are in the way. The Path to Glory lieth thro' all the Difficulties which Hell can project to stop the Progress. *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and only the violent take it by Force.* *Mat. xi. 12.* Neither is there such cause to fear Difficulties, as soft Nature, and our unbelieving Hearts would

would alledge : Stones are rolled out of the way in a vigorous plying of Duty in the Case ; I know some who are accounted singular, and do indeed acquit themselves faithfully as to a close and circumspect Observance of Communicants, and yet cannot say that they ever suffered any Trouble on that Score, setting aside some secret Grumbings, which neither the Persons durst avow, nor had any uneasy Effect, otherways worthy of the least Notice.

Phil. I accept these Answers, and I hope that the Lord will give further Light, and shall therefore proceed the more freely in objecting all that I possibly can. *Object.* 2. It would seem that the Apostolical Churches were not constituted, at least so thoroughly, as is alledged ; for notwithstanding the honourable Designations given to that of *Corinth*, yet there were gross Corruptions amongst them, and in particular, with reference to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was so abused, that some drunken Persons, and even in their Drunkenness, were admitted to it. *1 Cor.* xi. 21.

Nic. I know that no small Stir is made about this, and that, mainly on this Pretext, divers have taken a great deal of Latitude ; and therefore, as I have often pondered the thing before the Lord, so I have consulted the habilest Criticks, and most judicious Commentators upon the Text, which were within my reach ; and after all, I am confirmed, and find a great deal of Harmony as to some Particulars, and remember not of any who opposeth, namely, *viz.* 1mo. That the original Word which we translate *drunk*, is of a large Meaning, as likewise our own, and doth not necessarily signify that Excess, which quite incapacitateth for the Exercise of

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Reason, but such as goeth beyond a due and Christian Measure, and by which the Mind is clouded, and both Soul and Body, in so far, unfitted for spiritual Exercises. 2. Although I be far from justifying the thing, or extenuating the Guilt, yet common Justice requireth, that the Circumstanced Case should be fairly considered, in order to the passing a right Verdict. They had, at that time, their Love Feasts, whether a little before, in Imitation of the Paschal Supper, or mingled in with the Sacrament, or in what manner, now I dispute not; only it is not so strange, nor will it bear the weight of the alledged heavy Conclusions, though no way justifiable, that in public and solemn Entertainments at these times, some of the Guests did so far exceed Measures, as to indispose themselves for Worship: And no less readily could be expected, seeing the Practice had no Warrant from the Lord: and hence was, in so far, out of the Way of his promised Preservation, and Conduct, on which head, as also because of the Abuse, the more justly abolished. Now propose but your Argument in form, and you will easily perceive the Invalidity *viz.* That Church, wherein some exceeded due Measure at their Love Feasts, could not be composed of Persons, who had, at least, the Outside fair as to Religion; but in the Church of *Corinth* some exceeded: *E.* I need not point out the Weakness of this Argument, which yet will be found the less cogent, if we consider, 3. That there is no Necessity to understand the Word *drunk* as denoting an Excess merely of Drink, for such an Acceptation neither agreeth much with the Subject, Matter and occasion, *viz.* a solemn Feast and Entertainment

nor standeth in so fair an opposition to the Term *hungry*, nor is it necessary, seeing Excess in Meat is sometimes so termed. Thus Princes are said to *eat in due Season, for Strength and not for Drunkenness*. Eccl. x. 17. The plain Truth of the Matter, as I judge, is this, *viz.* That at these Feasts, some exceeded due Bounds both as to Meat and Drink, and so rendered themselves unfit for participating at the Lord's Table, for it were had to presume that they sat down to drink after their Meals were ended.

Phil. I will not deny, but that the Matter might have been so, and *Charity which thinketh no evil*, would incline me to take Things by the better Handle; yet I cannot be altogether rid of a Scruple, *viz.* What if this Sense be too diminutive, and that the Excesses were greater than you have acknowledged? Sure it is no uncaseable Thing, that People drink themselves drunk at Feasts.

Nic. Be it so, and let us take it for granted, altho' I see no Ground for going that length, but I beseech you then, take the Text entirely, and remember that Character which the Spirit of the Lord giveth of such a Partaking in the same Place, *viz. This is not to eat the Lord's Supper*. And what if I should say, that the Ordinance itself was perverted and polluted on that Head, and turn the Cannon upon you, by arguing *a fortiori*, *viz.* If the Admission of some guilty of such Excesses, as aforesaid, rendered the Eating to be no more eating of the Lord's Supper, though undoubtedly many godly Persons were there, what should be thought of such a Company of Communicants, whereof
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some were guilty of gross things, and but few have any probable Appearance of the Experience of Religion, and may be looked upon as Children of God, born again, born from above. I decide not, but desire both to think and speak modestly, and am loth to stretch in this, or any Thing; only if we consider the Character which the Apostle gives of the Practice in that circumstanced Case, we will not find Ground to argue from thence, for the ordinary Latitude. But go on, if you please, to further Objections.

Phil. Object. 3. You seem to lay the great Stress of your Argument against Persons who are in a natural Estate, their communicating, on this, *viz.* That they are altogether unfit for that Work; for it cannot be denied, but that it is a plain and positive Duty to hold forth the Lord's Death till he come, although none but gracious Persons be in case to do so. Now this arguing appeareth to proceed upon a false Principle, *viz.* That we are not obliged to that for which we have no Fittedness. For this would cast loose our Obligation to all christian Duties whatsoever; sure no Person in a natural Estate is fit for any of them; you know that he can neither pray, read, hear, or even pray aright, and shall he lay all these aside till he be fit? Even so, although he cannot communicate aright, yet this hindereth not, but that he is bound to communicate.

Nic. Your Argument, dear Sir, proveth too much, and therefore proveth nothing. And, if it have any Strength, it sticketh as much against that which you confess, as any Thing. To make out this

this, I only remind you of what is agreed on all Hands, *viz.* That Persons ignorant, heretical, and scandalous, &c. ought not to communicate, while remaining such; but your Argument taketh in them as well as others, without any, even the least Difference. Be pleased but to apply it, and this will be manifest, *viz.* Persons ignorant, heretical, and scandalous, and you may also add *Turks, Jews,* and *Pagans*, are obliged to pray, hear, read, &c. and to attend a Gospel Ministry, whensoever it is within their Reach, though they be wholly out of case to do any such things aright, and why not ought they, according to your Argument, to shew forth the Lord's Death till he come? All are positive Duties, and the Obligation dependeth not upon our Fittedness; the Ignorant and Scandalous may not desist from praying, because they cannot pray aright, and why, according to the same Principle, from communicating, although they cannot communicate aright.

Phil. You may defeat my Argument, I acknowledge, honoured Sir, but yet much of my Difficulty, as to the Thing remaineth. Pray how shall I understand this? It is a clear Duty to shew forth the Lord's Death till he come; and yet it is a Sin, say you, for any Person in the State of Nature to do so. It is their Sin to do it, and it is their Sin not to do it; and thus, a Necessity of sinning seemeth to be laid upon them, do what they will. How shall I reconcile these?

Nic. I easily answer you, in the plain Words of the Spirit of the Lord in the Scriptures, *viz.* *Unto the Pure all Things are pure, but unto them that*
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are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their Mind and Conscience is defiled, Tit. i. 15. You know the harmonious Strain of the protestant Doctrine, according to the Scriptures, viz. *That without Faith it is impossible to please God; and whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin. An evil Tree cannot bring forth no good Fruit, Heb. xi. 6. Rom. xiv. 23. Matt. vii. 18, &c.* Nor can wholesome Water flow from a corrupt and poisoned Fountain. Are we not all agreed, that the very best Performance of the Unregenerate, as well as of the Heathen, are but splendid Sins?

Phil. I believe so, and shall not move any Doubt on that Head; yet if it be thus with him, were it not better that he should be about the commanded Duty of shewing forth the Lord's Death till he come, though sinfully performed by him, than that he should omit the same?

Nic. Your Query or Argument insinuated, laboureth still of the former Disease, and carrieth Things too far, even to such a length, as none of the reformed Churches can allow. For clearing this I take the same *Medium*, and improving it in your Manner, I argue, Whatsoever the Ignorant and Scandalous do, they still sin; whether they communicate or not, all is sin: And therefore, it were better they should be about the commanded Duty of *shewing forth the Lord's Death until he come*, though sinfully performed by them, than that they should neglect that Work.

Phil. I reply, that there is a visible Disparity in the Case: For the Ignorant and Scandalous being altogether out of Capacity for that Exercise, it is agreed amongst all, to whom we owe any Regard

in this Matter, that though it be in itself a material Duty to commemorate the Lord's Death, yet it is not their immediate Duty; they ought first to be in some Fittedness for it, otherwise they would render themselves *guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and eat and drink Judgment to themselves*: But Matters are better stated with the Knowing, and those who are of an edifying Walk. I hope you will not deny that it is their Duty, and an immediate Duty unto them.

Nic. I dare not yield so much, for though I still acknowledge that such cannot be legally secluded, yet I continue of the Mind, that the Overseers of the Church may not incite, or encourage any to go immediately unto the Lord's Table, but according to what Satisfaction they have, more or less, about their gracious Estate; and the assigned Disparity is not such as you alledge; for, upon a nearer View, it will not be found the immediate Duty of any one in the State of Nature to communicate. It is a plain and positive Duty of all, to shew forth the Lord's Death till he come; be it so, I deny it not; but sure it is not their immediate Duty; Union must preceed Communion: Life is necessarily presupposed to Eating: Our spiritual Death is, at once, both our Sin and righteous Judgment. But sure we must have Life, ere we can be capable of Nourishment. But to deal more plainly and pointedly, seeing he who discerneth not the Lord's Body, is guilty of his Body and Blood, a heinous Guilt, and eateth and drinketh Judgment to himself; and for as much as his Body is not discerned but by saving Faith, of which all in the State

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of Nature are utterly destitute, it cannot be the immediate Duty of any such to partake, except you will say, that it is their Duty to crucify again the Lord of Glory. The Order, which the Lord hath set, is plain: First, the Thing signified, and then the Sign; first to be, let me so term it, instated in the Gospel Covenant, by a gracious and saving Change, and then to have free Access to the Seals. Sure it were a Piece of treasonable Presumption to invert this Order, and for such Persons to invade the Seals, who are utter Strangers to the Covenant of Promise. To conclude then, you know the received Doctrine of the reformed Churches that tho' they who are in a natural Estate, under the Reign of Sin, can do nothing in Faith, and acceptably to the Lord; yet none doubt but that they may, under a more common Influence, abstain from divers Sins, and perform several Duties right upon the Matter. And, as to the present Case I durst never entertain the least Hesitation, while I was persuaded of my being in a State of Nature, but that it would have been an atrocious Crime for me to have communicated; a'tho' even then the Outside was so fair, that I wanted not abundance of Encouragement from Ministers and others, true and eminently gracious. In one Word, I reckon it a necessary and material Duty for a Person, knowing himself to be in the Estate of Nature, and unregenerated, upon his Peril, to abstain from the Children's Table, and do truly reckon it some Token for Good, when they are so far convinced as to do so from Grief and Shame before the Lord, that Matters are so sadly stated with them.

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Whereas I am strongly persuaded, that a presumptuous Rushing, without any Regard unto the Bounds which the Master hath set, doth, in the righteous Judgment of God, seal up and harden them in that Estate more than any Thing I know; to say nothing of the temporal Strokes which this also procureth, and upon which the Mismanagements, even of the Godly, of whatsoever Rank, have their own Influence, 1 *Cor.* xi. 30.

Phil. It is further objected, 4^{to}. That this is, in a considerable Part, the Independent Principle; whereas the stated Judgment of Presbyterians is represented to be, *viz.* That such as are knowing in some tolerable Measure, and not scandalous, ought *in foro poli*, that is, before the Lord, and as obliged by him, ought to communicate.

Nic. I never understood it so, although we may not reject a true Principle, own it who will; (to say nothing now of the Regard which we owe to our worthy Brethren of the congregational Way, tho' in some Things we differ from them). But to deal plainly and roundly with you, I represent, *imo.* That I find not this which you alledge to be the Presbyterian Principle, either in our Confession of Faith, or Catechisms, which are our received Standards, but rather the downright contrary. In the 29th Chapter, concerning the Sacraments, Article 7. we have these express Words, *viz* *Worthy Receivers outwardly partaking of the visible Elements, in this Sacrament, do then also inwardly by Faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all Benefits of his Death, &c.* And sure it is no

straining, but plainly implied, that they are not worthy Receivers, who, being in black Nature, are wholly out of Case to do so. And I hope you will acknowledge, that none should sit down at that Table but worthy Receivers. I confess that the following Article is not so full and clear, but this maketh all plain: and even that Article debarreth the Ungodly, which all in the State of Nature are, in a true and scriptural Account; and so are unfit, as the Confession in that same Article well expresseth it, to enjoy Communion with the Lord. Our Catechisms teach the same Doctrine, both shorter and larger, declaring it in express Terms to be a Sacrament of spiritual Nourishment, which certainly presupposeth Life, and that the worthy Receivers feed upon his Body and Blood, to their Growth in Grace, and have their Union and Communion with the Lord confirmed. Here's a scriptural and authentical Account of our Presbyterian Principle on the Head, to which my Soul doth sweetly and cordially adhere; you may view the particular Passages of Scripture in the Book. *2do*. Whosoever maintaineth this Principle, *viz.* 'That any in a natural Estate are required by the Lord, tho' continuing so, to communicate; why do they smother it? why do they not openly own and avow it? are they ashamed of it? Let them then declare in express terms, *viz.* you who are not ignorant and scandalous, though it be as clear as if written with a Sun Beam, that you are under the Power of Darkness and of Satan, and howsoever strongly and effectually convinced that you are none of the Children, yet come freely to the Lord's Table, the Lord requireth it, and if

you refuse, you rebel against him. Why should we not deal candidly and fairly in these Matters? If it be a Sin for any 'out of Christ to communicate, the Watchman endangereth his Soul if he warn him not. If it be a Duty, let it be enforced, and let not the Unregenerated be henceforth debarred from the 'Table of the Lord: when it is solemnly fenced, *Ezek. iii. 17, 18, &c. xxxiii. 7. 3.* If it be the Duty of any out of Christ immediately to communicate, then the Words of the Institution are truly applicable to him, in so far as the Lord hath made that his Duty. And therefore, though still out of Christ, he may draw Encouragement from Christ's Body being broken, and his Blood shed for him; and that he may truly discern the Body of the Lord, altho' he have no Faith, for sure there is nothing to hinder this in the Estate of those whom the Lord calleth to communicate. And this to me is as much as that a Man may see, who never yet had Eyes. But I weary to apply the rest.

Phil. You have greatly satisfied me, and I do ingenuously declare, that as I have neither concealed, nor minced any one thing about which I had the least real Scruple, but represented all and every Particular ingenuously, and in the utmost of Strength, that I could understand to be in any of the several Arguments; so I have but a few other Scruples. It is objected, 5to. That the Passover was administered in a greater Latitude, and that the whole Body of *Israel*, not ceremonially, or in a more gross manner morally unclean, were required by the Lord to partake, and why not also of the Lord's Supper?

Nic. This is the grand Erastian Objection, and you may view that whole Purpose, largely treated by the renowned Mr *Gillespy*, in his *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, in divers Chapters of that excellent Book, to which the Index will direct. You may also see some hints in the fore-cited Sacramental Notes, contained in a Letter to a Friend, for I love not to transcribe: I only add a Particular or two, *1mo.* It was all *Israel's* Duty to eat the Passover, but a previous Duty to be fitted, that they might eat in Faith. *2do.* It may, and ought to suffice us, that the Institution and Limitations, as to the Lord's Supper, are plain and clear; if the Lord allowed a greater Latitude as to the Passover, which yet is doubted, why should we stumble? The Old Testament, and more imperfect State of the Church, had its Rules and Boundaries which they were to observe, and we are as much obliged to keep within ours. Shall we directly transgress a plain New Testament Institution, because there are some things in the Old which we cannot so well understand? *3tio.* I see no Inconveniency in yielding that there was a greater Largeness in the Institution of the Passover, than of the Lord's Supper seeing it, *viz.* the Passover, *Exod.* xii. 1, 2, 3 was appointed for the solemn Commemoration of a Benefit, whereof all *Israel* were Partakers, *viz.* their Deliverance from the *Egyptian* Bondage, besides its typical Relation to the Lord Jesus. *4to.* It needeth not to be thought strange, though there be some greater Latitude in the Type, than in that which is typified. And what if it should be said that the whole Body of *Israel* their partaking of the Pass

Passover did typify and represent the true *Israel* of God, the whole Company of Believers their feeding upon Christ our Passover, who was sacrificed for us? This, certainly, affordeth no handle for unwarrantable Laxness, and is abundantly suitable to the usual strain of that Typical Oeconomy. But I insist not, referring you to the forementioned, and other Presbyterian Authors.

Phil. I have not any further Difficulty with reference to the last Head, and am satisfied that the Eucharist, in its Nature, is a confirming and sealing Ordinance, which presupposeth a gracious Estate, and have been often refreshed to read this clearly and largely demonstrated by our famous Mr *Gillespy*, who taketh that wicked Brood of *Thomas Erastus* to task in this Matter; and this is the harmonious Doctrine of Presbyterians, which I drank in from my most tender Years, having had the Advantage of a liberal Education amongst them, Suffer me now to propose some Difficulties in Point of Management about the ignorant and scandalous, who, as is generally agreed, may, and ought to be secluded judicially, at least, in case they should push their pretended Claim. And as to the ignorant, I see considerable Straits about a positive Decision, seeing some, who truly fear the Lord, may be low in Knowledge, and yet more unable to clothe with plain and intelligible Words that which they have really known and found, yea, some of a greater reach may be notwithstanding defective, this Way. I would gladly then have your thoughts of these two Heads, *imo.* By what Rule and Standard shall the Knowledge of Communicants be tried by Ministers
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and Elders, seeing Persons truly gracious may yet be ignorant of many Things belonging to the Principles of Religion, and contained in our Confession and Catechisms? 2. In what Method shall such an Inquiry or Trial be managed, so as neither to crush any of the poorest Weaklings that belong to Christ, nor encourage the Presumptuous?

Nic. These Heads are of great Weight, and I dare not venture upon a too particular and close Answer unto what you enquire about them, being persuaded that much must be referred to the Discretion of the Overseers of the Church, as it may please the Lord to direct them in circumstanced Cases. Only, in general, as to a clear and scriptural Standard, I know none better than that which is condescended upon in a late Act or Recommendation of the National Assembly of this Church, *viz.* Assembly 1706. Act 11. which you may view, and forasmuch as this Sacrament is a Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace, it were proper and most necessary that Communicants should be tried about their understanding the Nature of that Covenant, whereof it is a confirming Seal. It may, and ought to be earnestly, yet in a prudent, and friendly Manner inquired unto, what Thoughts, and, may I so term it, what Gust and Savour they have of the same. This way hath a Threefold Advantage, not to mention other Particulars, for *1mo.* It bringeth the Matter of Trial as to the Principles of Religion, to one main, clear and comprehensive General, to which the whole is easily and conveniently reducible. *2do.* This Covenant is of such a Nature, that both the most judicious and confirmed may know their

their standing, and ought to measure their Progress according to it ; and yet is pleasantly suited to the sweet and supernatural Genius of the weakest Babe in Christ *The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* *Psal.* xxv. 14. 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5. *John* x. 1, 2, 9, &c. 3tio. The Ordinance itself pointeth natively to this, being a confirmatory Seal of this Covenant ; and therefore the whole Trial, whether more secret, or in Communication with others, should run out more especially in this Channel. As to the Way of managing this Enquiry ; I humbly judge that it should bear Proportion with the respectively Circumstanced Cases of Communicants, and may be done more thoroughly and pointedly with these of greater Experience, but should be managed in the most condescending Manner with Babes, so as to lay the thing before them in the easiest Terms, and to cast about in all friendly Ways, so as to give them but little more of trouble than simply to answer Yes, or No.

Phil. I am satisfied with your Resolution of the proposed Doubt, only I observe, that this is a Business of Time, and cannot be expedied in a Hurry, and sure the Weight of the Matter requireth all possible Deliberation. I have but one other Particular to represent with reference to Scandals, *viz.* That there is some Difficulty in condescending upon these Sins, which may be justly reputed Scandals of such a Nature, as to found an ecclesiastical Sentence. If you take the Words largely, as denoting every Evil, which layeth a Stumbling-block in our Brother's way, being of a Tendency inductive to Sin on his Part, I know none free of Scandal in
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this respect. And if it be taken in a more narrow Sense, as to extend no further than to such more enormous Scandals, for which the Person is actually under Process; it will but reach very few, some Persons being hardly, if at all, within the reach of Church Judicatories, and all of these Judicatories not being equally inclined to such a Cognizance, when yet it might and ought to be. Besides, you know that many Things are necessary to be cleared for opening an Ecclesiastical Process, which cannot be intended always, consistently with Edification, though the Guilt be real and known. And you will grant, that even enormous Evils, and capable of sufficient Probation, yet are not to be brought to Light unnecessarily, lest we should make Scandals, where none were, the thing being hid. But sure it would be hard to admit them all to the Lord's Table, who are not of this Class.

Nic. I know no fitter Rule with reference to this, than the premised; and therefore do incline to a middle Way betwixt the forementioned Extremes, for which effect, I shall first lay down this *Thesis*, viz. They who are guilty of such Evils as may be legally instructed to be either inconsistent with a Gospel Covenant, or gracious Estate, or are of such an offensive Nature that no Person may justly look upon them to be in that Estate, while both tolerable Evidences are wanting, and they continue impenitent. Such Persons, I say, may, and ought to be secluded legally, especially in case they push their unwarrantable Claim.

Phil. I deny not the Truth of this, dear Sir, but it is a General, and leaveth me near as much in the dark as before. I pray you, condescend upon somewhat more particularly and closely. *Nic.*

Nic. I designed to do so, but thought fit to premise the foresaid Position, to shew that I proceed upon the same Principle in the whole of this Purpose. And, as to Scandals, which ought to seclude from the Lord's Table, *1mo.* I think it very clear, that they, whom the Lord hath excommunicated from Heaven, should be likewise both doctrinally and judicially debarred from that Table. You know the black List, *1 Cor.* vi. 9, 10. *Gal.* v. 19, 20, 21. *2do.* The more gross and notour Works of the Flesh give too valid Grounds for such a Seclusion. *3tio.* For as much as it is the Children's Table, and Care ought to be had that Dogs profane it not, I humbly judge, that the Grounds of Seclusion, even in an ecclesiastical Way, are solid, in so far as it may be instructed that the pretending Communicant is guilty of such Evils, which evince that he is destitute of a moral Concern, and even ordinary Seriousness of that kind about the Duties of Religion. Such are these, who habitually neglect the Lord's Worship in secret, and in their Families, who give little Attendance, and, for most part, by a Sort of Constrzint, to the Means of Grace and Instruction; who express their profane Hatred of the truly and eminently Godly, by cruel Mockings of, and Injuries done to them, so far as they can; who stand not upon minced Oaths, and other such gross Enormities, in their ordinary Communication, and more of this Nature, which I need not condescend upon, and the prudent Overseers of respective Congregations may and will advert unto, as it shall please the Lord to direct. Nevertheless, after all, divers such may creep in, especially in more numerous Congregations; yet the Watchmen may have

Peace, in so far as all possible Inquiry hath been made, and Care taken to prevent such a Profanation of that distinguishing Ordinance.

Phil. But may not Persons truly godly, be sometimes guilty of scandalous Evils, *viz.* the being overtaken with Drink, at Times swearing, when greatly provoked, or the like; and would you, on these Heads, even though the thing were known, debar them from the Lord's Table?

Nic. I answer, Howsoever some, who fear the Lord, may be, at a Time, overtaken and hurried away with the Violence of some one or other Temptation, beyond what I shall take upon me to determine, *Gal. vi. 1. Luke xxii. 32.* yet this affordeth no colourable Pretext in favours of such, who have no probable Appearance of Religion, and yet are guilty, and diverse of them notourly, of such gross Wickednesses. I hope that these Evils, to which any who fear God are rarely hurried, ought not to be taken for Evidences of Grace. *2do.* Put the Case, that a Believer is so stated, no Difficulty ought to be moved on that Head; for, I sincerely think, he would be very loath to approach, howsoever solicited, until he were humbled before the Lord, and the Offence removed in the most edifying way. The Ancients applied that known Passage to the Case of Offences, as well as of private Grudges: *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, &c. Matt. v. 23.* And I shall be bold to say, that in Matters of Offence, as aforesaid, which may affect the Godly, the first and more immediate Duty is to remove the Offence.

Phil. I would have offered one Objection more, but that I remembered it is proposed in it its whole

apparent Strength, and fully answered by great Mr *Gillespy*, in that forecited Tract, viz. the Instance of *Judas's* being admitted to the *Lord's Table*.

Nic. That worthy Author demonstrateth that he did not partake of the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, and is far from being singular in that Opinion. He hath likewise divers weighty Arguments to evince that he did not so much as participate of the Passover; shewing that, before the Pascal Supper, the Jews had one of a more common Nature, where *Judas* was. Yet giving, but not granting, that he did communicate, nothing more can be inferred, save a providential Disposement, which all unworthy Communicants have, and that evil Spirit had, who was a lying Spirit in the Mouth of *Ahab's* Prophets, 1 *Kings* xx. 21, 22. *John* xii. 6. Our Lord knew that he was a Thief, yet he gave him the Bag. I hope that none will hence infer, that we ought to intrust with our Means Persons known to be unfaithful.

But to come more closely home if you will needs urge the Parallel, in case he was admitted, which I think not, our Lord knew the horrible Treachery and Murder which *Judas* was then projecting; yet in his adorable and holy Providence, he suffered him to partake, without speaking so much as one Word to the contrary; and will you thence deduce, that though a Minister know that a pretending Communicant is, at that very Time, hatching the blackest Treason that ever was contrived, and goeth to the Lord's Table to cover the Treachery; yet he ought not so much as to warn him? I think not strange to hear such an Objection from the black-mouthed.

mouthed *Erastians*; But I marvel what you intend by it! Would you say that it was the Duty of that grand Traitor to communicate, and that he was obliged, as in the Sight of God, and of our Lord Jesus, to partake of the Seals, though conscious to himself of the aforesaid Villanies, and in the Pursuit of them? Except you say this, you say nothing to evince the intended Conclusion, *viz.* That it is the Duty of any in the State of Nature to communicate. In one word, our Lord and Law-giver, who himself is above Law, did (presupposing what yet is not granted) in his spotless Providence, suffer, and *Judas* did communicate, without so much as any previous Warning of Danger; but nothing followeth from thence in prejudice of that clear Rule, which he hath given both to Pastors and People.

Phil. I have one further Scruple, which I acknowledge cannot well be put in Form, having but little Semblance of an Argument, *viz.* That it hath pleased the Lord to vouchsafe his gracious Presence at that Ordinance, notwithstanding an Admission considerably promiscuous; and although I argue not positively from this Ground, yet I would gladly have your Thoughts about the Conduct of spotless Providence in this regard.

Nic. You propose the Doubt modestly, and yet there is a real Difficulty in the Thing: Take these few Remarks upon it. *1mo.* You say well, that the Objection will not run in a syllogistical Form, *viz.* They who enjoy the Lord's gracious Presence in an Ordinance, are not justly chargeable with sinful Mismanagements in the Conduct; but, &c. *E.* It were a very bad Use of that

that Mercy, thereupon even to extenuatè Sin, and yet worse to justify whatsoever we do. It pleaseth our gracious Lord to vouchsafe his Presence, and the Influences of his Grace, as confirming his own Work upon the Hearts of these whom he maketh single in the Main; and at these Seasons, to speak to the Consciences of many: And far be it from me to darken any Thing of this Nature. The Lord, for his own Name's Sake, keepeth House with his People, notwithstanding many Faults which follow them; yet much is wanting both in Heart and Sanctuary Reformation; as to all which it is meet to be said unto them, *That which I see not, teach thou me; wherein I have done Iniquity, let me do no more.* Job xxxiv. 32. 2do. If we take our Measures in this Matter from special, saving, and abiding Effects, and be not fond of transient Flashes, tho' amounting to a Kind of *Hosannas*, John viii. 31. and xv. 4. Matters will come to a lower Account than many think; and even such Flourishes, howsoever empty, are not much found. 3tio. Altho' the Lord suffer many Evils in his Children and Churches, proceeding from Ignorance, or Inadvertance; yet as he requireth Progress in Reformation, so he will not countenance our drawing back through the Prevalence of selfish Motives. And whosoever fly in the Face of plain Light, held forth to them, shall find that it is with the Lord they have to do. 4to. I could instance several dismal Fruits of promiscuous Communicating, and represent divers other things of Weight, with Relation to what I advance, but that I spare, from the honourable Regard and fervent Love, which I bear to several judicious and godly Persons, who use a greater Liberty

Liberty in this Ordinance, than I can see Ground for. Nevertheless I can solemnly attest, that nothing in all this is designed in the least to discourage the poorest Weakling, who hath even the smallest Sparkle of the Life of God. And though, upon the one Hand, it is a dreadful thing to be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and that it is necessary we examine ourselves about our State, towards the Prevention of this; yet I heartily agree with that which our Larger Catechism containeth for encouraging the weak and doubting Believer.

Phil. You have been at much Pains for clearing up this Head, and have had the Patience to hear and answer whatsoever I could except or object. One Difficulty doth yet further occur, which I shall propose by way of Question, *viz.* How shall a Minister carry towards Persons unexceptionable as to any thing which falleth regularly under an ecclesiastical Cognizance, and yet it may be abundantly evident unto any who know these Things, that they are in an unconverted Estate; and notwithstanding they claim this Privilege, as being endowed with a Competency of Knowledge, and for what appeareth, of a becoming Walk?

Nic. I answer, *imo.* That if Means were used more thoroughly to hold forth the Nature of the Ordinance, with the Sinfulness and Danger of presuming without the Lord's Warrant, as aforesaid. This would be much prevented, such Persons not daring to apply for Admission. *2do.* If more public Warning prevail not, thorough Freedom ought to be used with them in secret, yet in all possible obliging Methods. And by the Way, I must say that a conscientious Abstinence, I understand from the soli
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Persuasion of Duty in the Case, when the Person knoweth that he is an utter Stranger to Regeneration, ought to be more cautiously spoken of, both in public and private, as, howsoever humbling the Cause be, yet evidencing that somewhat of Conviction hath reached the Conscience, and that the Person is under so much of Concern, as seriously to ponder Duty and Sin in the Matter; whereas a rushing forward, through want of this Caution, merely because it is thought creditable amongst Men, may, in the Lord's righteous Judgment, irrecoverably seal up the Person under the Power of Darknes: And O that such Presumption were not too much encouraged, by an ill cautioned pressing and despising of these who dare not presume! *3tio.* I think a Minister may have Peace, having, in a personal Trial, given faithful and free Warning; for that the Key of Doctrine is carried, for what I can see, to its full Length in this Case; and he may leave the Matter upon the Lord. Who knows what it may please the Lord to do more nearly before, and at the Ordinance itself?

Phil. I dare not press this further, but shall only add, that I find several Expressions in our Directory, which shew, that the Principle which we hold is not singular. See (as in my Copy) Page 189. Line 9. where we have these Words, namely, How necessary it is that we come unto it (the Lord's Table) with Knowledge, Faith, Repentance, Love, &c. And in the same Page, about Line 22. see these Words, where, after some Things of the like Nature, the Persons to be invited by the Minister are designed such as desire to reach out to a greater

Progress of Grace, which manifestly presupposeth the Necessity of its being before implanted. See also Mr *Ferguson* against Separation, Page 195. where speaking of the painted Hypocrite, he saith, That Man hath an ecclesiastical Right to come to a Communion: such a Right as may warrant the Minister for admitting of him, although he have not a Right to come before God; God will challenge the Hypocrite for coming, &c.

XX

APPENDIX. *To show that I have advanced no singular Opinion, with reference to the Admission to, or Seclusion from this sealing Ordinance.*

YOU may view a large Catalogue of famous Reformers and other Divines, who all professed and were zealous in the Maintenance of the same Truth. See a List collected by the judicious and worthy Mr *Gillespy*, in his *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, from Page 489. But in regard that the Book is not easily had, I shall represent the following few Instances from among many others: p. 499. about the Middle. *Wolfgangus Musculus*, in his *Common Places de Cœna Dom.* page 350. hath these remarkable Words, thus Englished by our foresaid Author, viz. *Who seeth not what Manner of Persons we must be, when we approach to the mystical Table of the Lord; to wit, such as do not therein first of all seek the Fruition of the Body and Blood of our Lord, as if we were yet destitute thereof; but such as being already before Partakers thereof by Faith, do desire to corroborate more and more, &c.* Page 492, line 5. *Festus Honnius Disp.* 43. *Thef.*

iii. Confuting the popish Opinion about the Sacraments, hath these exprefs Words, namely, *They that receive the Sacraments, have Grace before they receive them, neither are any to be admitted to the Sacraments, who may be justly supposed not to be justified and sanctified.* In like manner *Aretius Comment.* on *Mark* xix. after diverse other Words concludeth, *That these Mysteries pertain to the Faithful alone, that is, to those who are supposed to be converted and Believers.* In the same Page, near the End, the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, in the Article entitled, *To whom Sacraments pertain;* saith thus, *But the Supper of the Lord, we confess to appertain to such only, as be of the Household of Faith, and can try and examine themselves, &c.* page 494. *Pareus Explic. Catech. Quest. lxxvii.* among the Differences between the Word and Sacraments, hath this expressly, viz. *That the Word is a Mean appointed both for beginning and confirming Faith; the Sacraments Means of confirming it, after it is begun; that the Word belongs both to the Converted and Unconverted; that the Sacraments are intended for the converted and none others.* See further in the same Page. *Walleus*, tom. 1. page 477. teacheth, that the Sacraments instrumentally confirm and increase Faith, but do not begin nor work, &c. From all which and the weighty Grounds supporting this harmonious Judgment of reformed Divines, in Opposition to *Papists* and *Erastians*: The Reverend Mr *Gillespy* concludeth page 503. about the Middle, viz. *That Christ hath intended this Sacrament to be the Children's Bread only; and he alloweth this Portion to none, but such as are already converted and believe; and that they who*

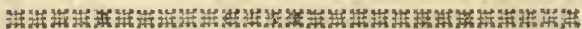
are the Ministers of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries of God, ought to admit none to the Sacrament, but such as are qualified and fit, so far as can be judged by their Profession, Knowledge and Practice, observed and examined by the Eldership, according to the Rules of the Word, no human Court being infallible, to have Part and Portion in the Communion of Saints, and to receive the Seals of the Covenant of Grace. From P. 504 and afterwards, Mr Gillespy produceth Twenty Arguments, proving that the Lord's Supper is no converting Ordinance, Pag. 507. he hath this Argument, *That Ordinance which is instituted only for Believers and justified Persons, is no converting, but a sealing Ordinance; but the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is instituted only for Believers and justified Persons: Ergo. The minor of this Argument is proved sufficiently by the reverend Mr Gillespy, and amongst his other Illustrations of it, he cites Polani Syntag. Lib. 6. Chap. 36. If, says he, Unbelievers and Impenitents be admitted to the Lord's Table, the Ordinance is profaned; because Christ forbiddeth expressly Unbelievers and manifestly wicked, to be admitted to the Holy Table, which was instituted only for Believers.*

Mr. Gillespy's Seventh Argument, Pag. 510. is very pungent and strong, viz. *That Ordinance unto which one may not come without a Wedding Garment, is no converting Ordinance; but the Supper of the Lord, the Marriage Feast of the King's Son, is an Ordinance unto which one may not come without a Wedding Garment: Ergo, &c. The Proposition, saith he, hath this Reason for it; If a Man must needs have a Wedding Garment that comes, then he must needs be converted that comes; for whatever you call*
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a *Wedding Garment*, sure it is a thing proper to the Saints, and not common to unconverted Sinners. Matth. xxii. 13. *The Assumption is clear from Matth. xxii. 11, 12. When the King came to see the Guests, he saw there a Man which had not a Wedding Garment, and he said unto him, Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having a Wedding Garment? and he was speechless; they of a contrary Opinion might have put this Argument in his Mouth, Lord, I thought this to be a converting Ordinance, and that thou wouldest not reject those that came in without a Wedding Garment, &c. Pag. 153. Mr. Gillespy proves it at length from 1 Cor. xxi. 27. Whosoever shall eat of this Bread and drink of this Cup unworthily, &c. and from the Testimony of Augustine, with other Fathers and Protestant Divines, that no unconverted Person should come to the Lord's Table; and endeth with these Words, I conclude therefore, that the Prohibition of eating and drinking unworthily, doth necessary imply a Prohibition of unconverted, unregenerate, impenitent Persons to come to the Lord's Table, and by consequence that is no converting Ordinance; also from the Directory on the Head, of the Lord's Supper, which speaketh of the Minister thus, he is in the Name of Christ, on the one Part, to warn all such who are ignorant, &c. not to come. Is it not held forth here, saith our Author, as the Will of Christ, that no profane, impenitent, and unconverted Person, ought, or may come to the Lord's Table, but only such as have something of the Work of Grace in them? Pag. 520. Mr. Gillespy citeth Beda upon 1 Cor. xi. who tells us, both out of Augustine and Prosper, that none ought to come to the Lord's Table, but a justified Person,*

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and such an one as abideth in Christ, and Christ in him. Pag. 539. and afterward, Mr *Gillespy* shows, *that the Admission of scandalous Sinners and Persons, known to be in a natural Estate, is a Pollution and Profanation of the Ordinance itself*: You may see this at greater length, in our worthy Author.



D I A L O G U E V.

Which containeth some Account of another Engine for brangling the Believer's Establishment in the Faith of the Lord's Goodness and Mercy, viz. The Solitude to which he is exposed by Suspicions raised concerning Gospel Truths, whereby the Faith of them is gradually undermined; together with Remarks pointing at the Remedy of this Evil.

Phil. **I** Now enter into a large Field, and the Thread of our Communings engageth me into a Purpose, or rather a great Variety of Purposes, so large that I know not well how to manage: And after some Consideration, I think the fittest Method will be, that I spread my Sores, and lay open the whole Concerns of the Malady, as plainly and closely as may be, yet with all possible Succinctness. All amounteth to this, namely, When my Soul rejoiceth in the Lord, and would quietly look out for the purchased Salvation, in all its Parts, and particularly these which my circumstanced Case, as to Corruptions, Temptations, and the weak Taper of spiritual Life doth more especially require; I have often found the humble and pleasant Set of my Spirit quickly removed, and the Soul darkened,
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rankled and wasted, not so much by any formed Temptation, of which I have not observed many in this Case, as by Suspicions, cunningly and secretly cast in, affecting the Truths of God, and consequently his Work upon the Heart, and in a way which had the fairest Probability of Success in the respective State of Matters, as to my spiritual Concerns. I know not well how to describe this. The nearest Resemblance I can fall upon is, as if some poisonous Air were secretly breathed, and left by Degrees to diffuse its murdering Influence, and in such a covered way, that its Ruins are spread considerably, before the true Source and Cause be understood. Religion is all Mystery, in Doctrine, Practice, and every thing which belongeth to it; and tho' the Believer may be truly established, both as to Truth and Grace, yet as none of them want their weak side, so the Evidence of Faith, being wholly supernatural and cross to corrupt Nature, is easily darkened, the strong Remains of our inward Darkeness laying us open to the Powers of Darkeness, and facilitating the Success of their several Engines. And forasmuch as our subtile Enemies wait all Catches, I find for my part, that many a time they take me at a Disadvantage this way; and these Suggestions, having for a while wasted and weakned the Soul, do thereby make way for greater and more formed Temptations. Upon the whole, I crave, honoured Sir, your mature Thoughts, as it may please the Lord to direct and furnish you, *imo*. About the secret Springs of this complex Spiritual Malady. *2do*. In what ways it pleaseth the Lord to cure it.

Nic. I see not any great Difficulty in unvailing the
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the Sources of this Evil; the greatest Strait with me is about the Remedy: Yet I am well satisfied, that we commune and concert, as it may please the Lord to give Light about the one and other. As to the Ground and Fountain of all these vexatious Tossings, it is manifestly a considerable want of Light, and great Weakness of Faith from thence resulting. It is so as to our bodily Concerns. He who walketh in some Light, but mingled with much Darknes, lieth accordingly open to many uneasy Suggestions and Suspensions about his Way, which would not cost him so much as one Thought when under a clearer Light. Our Enemies know the true State of Matters with us in that Regard, and whisper in their Cavils as they think to find readiest Access. Thus the Soul is unawares surrounded with Crowds of Jealousies and Fears, together with Swarms of Injections exciting the same; which would not have place or be utterly despised, were the Light clearer, seeing that which maketh manifest is Light.

Phil. I think I understand somewhat of this; but if you thought meet to illustrate it further, by some Instances from Scripture, it would be clearer.

Nic. We want not Abundance of these in the Word, and verified by the sad Experience of many exercised Souls. It was from this lamentable Defect that the Doubts, Fears and Faintings of our Lord's Disciples did flow, and for which he often checked them. They knew not much concerning his Person and Offices, while he was with them in the Flesh nor immediately after his Resurrection; but being leavened with some false Notions, especially as to the Concerns of his Kingdom, they often staggered about his Sufferings and Death, with other Things

of that Nature, as the Gospel History declareth largely and particularly. I quote not many Instances in a known Case. See *John* xiv. 4, 5, 6. 8. &c. *Luke* xxiv. from 21. and *Mark* v. 36. &c. *Eph.* ii. 12. & *Cor.* iv. 3. 6. *John* viii. 32. and *Ch.* xiv. 16, 17. and xvi. 13. 1. *John* 5. 20. Our Native Estate, being fallen, is an Estate without God, or an atheistical Estate in the World. Darknes and Enmity are even our Constituents in that Regard. And tho' *the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ* doth effectually cure the innate Heart-Atheism as to the Ground-work, giving right and true Thoughts of the true God, who hath manifested himself in the Gospel; yet many Clouds continue upon our Minds, and Mists arise from the strong Remains of Darknes, which yet beset us: And hence it is that Temptations of all kinds find a proportioned Entertainment. And even after that many of these Temptations are unravelled and defeated, by a further Entrance and Increase of saving Light, yet Suspicions are raised, because that much is wanting of Thoroughness of Establishment.

Phil. I shall not enquire further as to the Disease. I know, and find it to my sad Experience, and have often observed these woful secret Springs thereof, which you just now detected, although I could not give such a close Account of them. And now my Soul longs to hear somewhat of the Remedy, which I judge will likewise give me a better View of the Disease.

Nic. In order to our communing more closely upon the Head, I shall first lay down a Scheme sweet and manifest in itself, which yet I hope will

be further cleared in the Sequel; and therefore may be for the time assumed, *1mo.* The true God, One God in Three Persons, is only known and revealed in the Word, and particularly in the *glorious Gospel*; and therefore so long as the Vail is upon the Heart, *the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ* not having as yet shined upon it, the Person remaineth under the Power of Darknes, and without God, or an Atheist in the World. *2 Cor. vi. 3. 6. Col. i. 13. Eph. ii. 12* *2do.* Hence seeing the whole of revealed Truth centereth in the Lord *Jesus*, as shall be, if the Lord will, afterwards cleared, the Manifestation of Christ to, or, to use the Scripture Phrase, the Revelation of him in the Soul, giveth, according to its Measure, a View of the whole of that revealed Truth, in Bulk, and setteth the exercised Person on a right Ground, as to the fundamental Articles of Religion. *Gal. i. 15, 16. Eph. iv. 21. John viii. 29, 30, 31. 3tio.* A Light groweth, by the Lord's sending forth his Light and Truth into the Heart, seeing his going forth is prepared as the Morning, both Truth and Duty, in *all that pertaineth to Life and Godliness*, are more clearly seen in this Glass, and the exercised Soul is in a proportioned Measure satisfied about them by a further Entrance; and the growing Evidence of that Light, by which he who is the Light of the World manifesteth himself in, and from the Word. *Hos vi. 3. Prov. iv. 18. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Psal. xliii. 3. 4to.* It pleaseth the Lord, for his own Name's sake, to carry on his Work in this Manner, until all the Shadows shall be dispelled entirely by the Believer's Entrance into *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. Col. i. 12.*

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Having now laid down these Grounds, for Direction in our Communing, and with a Design of further Enlargement in the Sequel, our Converse will, I hope, be the more close on the several Heads, which are, or may prove, Matter of Conflict in these Respects, during the Course of our spiritual Warfare.

Phil. I am refreshed with this Scheme, and hope that through the divine Blessing it may be of use for directing me about several Purposes, concerning which I would gladly have your Thoughts; and that I may proceed with the greater Closeness, I shall observe the Order of the Scheme; hoping it will not be uneasy to you that I move some Enquiry about divers things, which have been Matter of Tossings to me, with reference to it, and bear with me, Sir, to represent, that it seemeth a little hard to design them all Atheists, who have the Vail still upon their Hearts; that they want saving Knowledge, and think and speak merely by Report, as the Blind do of the Light and Colours, is so manifest, that no Person, who hath the least Understanding of these Matters, can deny it. But to brand them with execrable Atheism, seemeth to be a Stretch beyond the due Bounds of Sobriety.

Nic. I give them in this no other Character, but that which the Spirit of God expressly ascribeth unto these, who are *Aliens from the Common wealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, viz.* That they are *without Hope and without God*, that is, in the same Words of the original Text, *Atheists* in the World. This I represented in *terminis*, in the first Article of the Scheme, and wonder that you should have proposed the Doubt so patly against the Words of the Text.

Phil. I acknowledge the thing; yet pardon me, to signify that I am intangled with some Difficulties about it, from which I cannot get wholly rid, and would gladly have your clearer Thoughts. Pray tell me, have not divers, who yet were destitute of saving Knowledge, done, notwithstanding, great Service in clearing and vindicating revealed Truth against the Intrigues of Heretics and Atheists, under whatsoever Disguise? Sure this is observable, especially if we consider, from what strength of Persuasion, upon clear and solid Grounds, they have acted in this Manner, and with how much of a kind of Zeal they have carried it, both in a serious and resolute Maintenance of the whole System of Gospel Truth, and against contrary Heresies and Errors, as these Tares have from time to time appeared. And if we further add that Smoothness and Strictness of Conversation, which also hath accompanied such Performances, it would appear the more strange, after all, to look upon such Persons as Atheists.

Nic. I confess all this, and reckon it my Duty to honour the Gifts of God, and the Persons indued with them, as the several State of the one and other requireth. And as for your Objection, it will be easily removed, if you but take another View of that first Article of the Scheme, which for your better Information I shall take into Pieces, and lay the Contents of it before you in these following Positions, *1mo.* The whole Race of Mankind, as Children of the first *Adam*, hath intirely lost that Light and Life, which was our primitive State and Beauty; our Sun did, in that regard, go down at Noon Day. I need not be at Pains to demonstrate-

a known and received Truth; it is an acknowledged Principle of the reformed Churches, and in plain Words taught us in the Scriptures of Truth, that we are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. Affuredly he who hath no Life, is void of Light also; besides, that the Spirit of the Lord declareth expressly, that we are not only darkened in the Understanding, but even Darknes itself in the Abstract; which, and the like Designations, are so significant, that nothing but infinite Wisdom could have contrived them; and therefore such diminutive Expositions, as quite enervate their Force, are a real and material giving the Lie unto the God of Truth. *Is. xxv. 7. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Eph. ii. 1, 2. 4. 18. 5. 8. 2.* As in this Estate, we are intirely, yet sinfully, destitute of Light and under the Power of Darknes; so we are as much void of Faith also, which only springeth from Light, as you know, in a humbled Mind. And therefore, whatsoever more common Notices of a Deity, may have place in Persons while in a natural Estate, and may beautify it, yet in all Propriety of Gospel Dialect, it may be said, that they want the Knowledge of the true God, and in so far have not their Assent unto the Scriptural and Gospel Discoveries of his being founded upon his own Testimony contained in the Word, and opened up and applied to their Hearts. And, in this Sense, they cannot in Propriety of Speech be accounted to believe the thing. *He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them who diligently seek him. Heb. xi. 5, 6.* I think you will not say, that this Faith can grow out of the barren Stock of corrupt Nature: Hereupon I infer,

3. That while the true God remaineth unknown,

as aforesaid, Light and Faith are wholly wanting; and in this Respect, Atheism reigneth in all who are out of Christ, and the Revelation of Christ in the Soul, I use the Scripture Phrase, is the only Remedy.

Phil. I believe it is so, yet seeing such who are in a natural Estate, may know, and also give a strong Assent to revealed Truth in this, and other Things; I would gladly understand what you think of the Nature of that Assent.

Nic. I think it much of the Nature of their Knowledge of other Things, and Assent unto them. Beyond all Doubt, Man, as a Creature made reasonable, hath a proportioned Capacity to form Notions of these Things, which he reads or hears, and our innate Pride maketh us the more ready to presume that we understand Matters which concern Religion; yet as these who never were in some remote and excellent Country, nor enjoyed the Privileges thereof, have but a very empty and insignificant Notion of it by mere Report; or born Slaves and blind Men, have mean Thoughts of Light and Liberty, and can never attain a just Idea of the one or other, which they never enjoyed; so it is with us in the same Manner, while void of Light and Life, and in the Dungeon of a natural Estate, as a Pit wherein there is no Water, *Zech.* ix. 11.

Phil. But pray, Sir, do you ascribe all this to mere Nature? And do you not acknowledge a higher Cause? Is there not a more common, yet an enlightning Work of the Lord's Spirit by the Word, which several in a natural Estate do enjoy; and by which some of them are fitted for Services
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considerable in their own kind? Sure the Scripture speaks of Blessings of that sort, which yet are not such as accompany Salvation, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1, 2, 3. *Heb.* vi. 4, 5, 9, &c. I know you will yield so much, and doth not this cure them of their Heart Atheism?

Nic. I think we need not insist longer upon this, seeing upon the Matter we agree, and nothing remaineth—but some little Ambiguity of Words, which also I think is plainly removed; I chearfully own that more common Work of which you speak: But we all know that the Power of Darknes continueth notwithstanding of it, and as the Earth remaineth without Form and void, covered with Darknes until the Lord created Light; so it is with the little World, there nothing but Darknes and Confusion is, until *God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darknes, shine in upon the Heart, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ,* 2 *Cor.* iv. 3, 6. This, and this only layeth the sure Ground-work of the Knowledge of the true God, and of a fixed Believing of his Testmony.

Phil. I am satisfied, and shall not push this further; I only add, that amongst others, one thing doth more especially confirm me of the certain Truth of what you just now advanced; namely, that when attacked by the Furies of Temptation upon the Faith of a Deity, I clearly found myself destitute of that Faith, and that my former Assent, how firm and sweet soever, through some more common Influences of the Spirit, yet could not so much as stand out the very first Shock, but was quickly overthrown, like the silly Forts or Bulwarks of Children

dren, reared up within the Sea Mark, which the first Touches of the swelling Waves do soon demolish. Thus when Matters devolved into a close and pointed Enquiry, *viz.* Believeſt thou indeed that God is? I found the Want, and would have quite ſuccumbed and joined Iſſue with the Temptation, had not the Lord given that Faith which before was not, and ſet it in Joint again from Time to Time by freſh Influences of Light and Life, in a renewed Conveyance of his own Teſtimony by himſelf into the Heart; *I, even I am the Lord, &c. Iſa. xliii. 11. xlv. 12. xlv. 8. Exod. iii, 14.* Thus you have ſatiſfied me about what I had to object or except, relative to the firſt Article of the Scheme. And as to the Suſpicions and Jealouſies of Unbelief which, you know, were the Matter of my Complaint, in the Entry of this our Communing, I ſee now more clearly, that the main Source of them all is a great deal of Darkneſs; and conſequently Heart-Atheiſm and Unbelief mingled in with ſome little of Light concerning the true God, as manifeſted in the Goſpel; and many a time my Soul ſobbeth out its afflictive Moan, O that I could believe, and believe firmly, without lying open to contrary Intanglements, through the Force and Cunning of Temptations, and ſtill hold this faſt under all the Viciffitudes of Providence, that *our Lord lives and reigns*, who hath ſaid, *Becauſe ye live, ye ſhall live alſo. Pſ. xcvi. 1. xix. 1. Job xiv. 19.* Bear with me now, dear Sir, that I propoſe whatſoever is more eſpecially ſtraightening to me as to the 2d Head of the propoſed Scheme. No that I in the leaſt queſtion the Truth of the Principle, only I would gladly have more Light, and

be further confirmed about it. You represented, That all revealed Truth centereth in the Lord Jesus, and promised to explain and evince so much in the Progress; now I would gladly have a more particular Deduction and Demonstration of this Truth, for I have no Hesitation about the Consequence mentioned in the latter Part of the Article.

Nic. Your Demand would require, that I should compile an entire System of Theology, both as to Doctrines, Precepts and Duties, &c. as all centering in Christ. This I think you will not expect, seeing I have neither time nor ability for such an Undertaking; nor could it well consist with the Nature and Scope of this our friendly and familiar Communing. Notwithstanding, that I may comply with your Desire, so far as is possible, be pleased to propose both as to Truths and Duties, that which you chiefly stick at, or lieth more especially obnoxious unto Temptations, drawing forth the Suspensions of Unbelief, to keep close to the Purpose first proposed, and we shall jointly consider the thing before the Lord, and concert what it may please him to manifest for curing this Malady, by shewing the Evidence of all these Truths and Duties, as centering in Christ.

Phil. To begin then with Truths, I shall assume so much as was touched on the first Branch of our Scheme; for I have no Difficulty about that which we ought to believe concerning the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and that great Mystery of Godliness, *God manifested in the Flesh*, with the like. For, tho' the Mysteries be high and incomprehensible, yet the Revelation of that which we are to believe, is plain; and therefore I shall pro-

ceed to some other Truths, and especially to these about which I have been chiefly haunted with contrary Jealousies, Doubts and Fears. And to begin with the eternal and glorious Contrivance of Salvation, as the same was laid down by way of an eternal Compact betwixt the Father and the Son, and to be brought to pass by the Three Persons, who are one God, according to the eternal Decree, in a distinct Oeconomy of each of them, as their respective Work is particularly set down in the Scriptures of Truth. I intreat you, Sir, inform me how that the Truths, which are inwrapped in that Counsel of Peace, do harmoniously concenter in the Lord Jesus.

Nic. Your Query is sweet and of great Import; neither is the Answer difficult, could I plainly express that which is upon my Heart, which I believe, and whereof I have tasted some ravishing Sweetness. Let us take but a little Glimpse of this Counsel of Peace, as held forth in the sacred Oracles, and the Truth of that which I have asserted will be manifest.

1mo. Our Sovereign Lord, One God in Three Persons, did from all Eternity elect some to everlasting Life, and all the Means which he will make to lead thereunto. *2do.* In this glorious Decree, the whole Matter is so ordered, that the Father giveth a certain Number of *Adam's* lost Race to the Son, to be redeemed by him. And the Son undertaketh to take upon him Man's Nature, and in their stead to obey the Law of the Covenant of Works compleatly, and to satisfy offended Justice to the full, all in their Room. Upon this, they are promised to him as his Right upon the Purchase. And in like manner from all Eternity, it is ordered, That
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the holy Spirit, One God with the Father and Son, shall, in the determined Time, apply this purchased Redemption to each of them, both in the Ground-Work and in every Part, until the Cope-stone be put upon the whole. *Gal.* iv. 4. *John* xv. 10. *John* xiv. 31. *Isa.* liii. 10, 11, 12. *John* x. 18. and xii. 49. *Isa.* xlix. 4. 6, 7, 8. *Psf.* xl. 7, 8, 9. and ii. 8. *John* xvii. 4, 5. *Heb.* viii. 22. *Joh.* xiv. 16, 17. and xvi. 18. &c. It is not now my Business to enlarge upon the Head; you may consult the Work of the learned and sound Divines, who have treated these Purposes more closely. Only, with reference to your Question, I think it not obscure, that the Truths inwrapped in this Compact center in the Lord Jesus; do but consider him in his Person and Offices, according to the plain, large and often inculcated Testimony of the Spirit of God, in Scripture, concerning him, and you have them all. I need not apply this particularly; pray, what other suitable Thoughts can we have of the alone Mediator between God and Man, but such as take in this blessed Compact, both in the Contrivance, Purchase, and Execution; and if you leave out any part, we have no more a true and compleat Redeemer.

Phil. This Touch reacheth the Scope of my Question; and therefore I shall not desire your insisting further, being satisfied that *Jesus*, who saves his People from their Sins, *Matt.* i. 21. is our *Alpha* and *Omega*, and also our Salvation, may I so express it, as to Contrivance, Purchase, and Conveyance, according to the eternal Counsel, as you just now hinted; and I ever understood that Compact or Covenant as centering in a notable display.

displaying the Glory of Christ, *in whom*, being one God with the Father and Holy Ghost, *alone all our Springs are*, *Psalms xxxvi. 9. and lxxxvii. 7.* But that I may carry on my Queries in an equable Manner, I desire to be informed of what is required of us in Point of Duty, with respect unto this eternal Counsel, and how Duties in this, as well as Truths, concenter in our Lord Jesus.

Nic. To give you a little Glance, in a Suitableness to the Nature of familiar Communings, which cannot be extended to the Dimensions of a regular Tract, I represent the following Particulars. *1mo*, The great and manifest Point of Duty, and that which hath a clear and immediate Connection with the Chain of Truth in this Matter, is that we should know and believe the Testimony of the Spirit of God concerning the Counsel of Peace, or Compact betwixt the Father and the Son. The mysterious Glory of the Thing is indeed great and incomprehensible, and therefore shall be a pleasant Object of Admiration, not only in Time, but also for ever and ever; yet the Scripture Record is plain and abundant in the Case, and assuredly the God of Truth, who hath revealed this Mystery, requireth that we should know and receive the Truth in these things, *as it is in Christ Jesus, Eph. iv. 21.*

Phil. If I may adventure, Sir, to interrupt the Thread of your Discourse, I take the Occasion, lest afterwards I should forget, now to signify, that this remindeth me of some very hurtful Mistakes of Conduct, in dealing with Souls, and which I have observed in divers, both of more public and private Stations. I honour the Ambassadors of the Lord Jesus, and hope that none, whether Ministers or private

private Christians, who have Christ's Stamp, will mistake me: Yet I must, with all due Respect, bemoan it, that the absolute Necessity of saving Knowledge, as a most necessary Ingredient of saving Faith, is often not duly held forth, and sometimes it is not, or is but slenderly insinuated, when yet in the mean while, all without Exception are vehemently pressed to accept the Lord Jesus, and to do it immediately, without the Delay so much as of one Moment. As to the Point of Duty in this Case, I dispute it not; we communed on that Head before, and I need not repeat: The main Thing which I lament, is the too native Effect of such a Conduct; namely, that through want of the foresaid necessary Caution, a Crowd of grossly ignorant People, especially when their Affections are a little touched and drawn forth, imagine instantly that they are Believers, and value themselves at no mean Rate, upon their momentary *Hosannahs*. And tho' that Morning Cloud go quickly over, yet they persevere to feed upon Ashes, and a deceived Heart procureth a continued Entertaining the dreadful Lie and Delusion, as to their present and eternal Estate, *Isa. xlv. 20. Hos. vi. 4.*

Nic. You well observe this, dear Sir, and tho' I truly believe that several worthy Men use the fore-mentioned Method from an honest Design, and are most earnestly desirous to get the Hearts of many engaged to an accepting the Lord Jesus as freely offered in the Gospel, yet were it but a little adverted to, it could not but be manifest to any who hath the least discerning of these things, that the fond Outgoings of the Hearts of such ignorant Persons towards an unknown Christ, are in a just Account,
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mere Embracings of an Idol. But, lest any should condemn this as an hard Saying, I desire that my Grounds may be impartially weighed, which amongst others are these following. *1mo*, The whole Concerns of the Gospel are high and hid. All is Mystery here. The Mystery of God and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, *Col. ii. 2, 3. Rom. xvi. 25, &c.* I need not enlarge this, whereof none doubt of such to whom we owe the least regard. *2do*. We, as Children of the first *Adam*, are not only altogether ignorant of this Mystery, but also our corrupt Natures are quite cross unto it, and violently set against it, and even under a specious Profession, our Notions about Things of that Sort are quite amiss. I think you want not that I should confirm the received protestant Doctrine to you. We believe and profess, that *the carnal Mind is Enmity against God*, *Rom. viii. 7. Col. i. 21.* that even the very Wisdom of the Flesh, as the Original will bear, is mere Enmity against him. *3tio*. This Alienation and Enmity remaineth in its compleat Reign, until the Eyes be opened, and that Light created which before was not, *2 Cor. iv. 3, 6. Acts xxvi. 18. Col. i. 13.* This we all profess; and I only deduce two Inferences, for evincing that which I just now advanced. *1mo*. That so long as the Vail remaineth upon our Hearts, although we had a good Measure of literal Knowledge, and yet more evidently when the very Letter of our received Principles is not understood, we know not the true God, God in Christ reconciling the World to himself, but form to ourselves, if not Idols of the Hand, yet an Idol of the Mind. And let me say it with a just Indignation.

dignation against the Wickedness in my own Soul; that Semblances of the Heart's outgoing towards him, and accepting of him, proceeding from this, are in a just and scriptural Account but empty Embraces of an Idol; for that in this Case, the true God is neither known, nor *his Testimony believed*, *Isa.* xxv. 7. *2 Cor.* iii. 15. and iv. 3. 6. *Acts* xvii. 23. *Acts* xxvi. 18. *John* ix. 36, 37. *Matt.* xvi. 17. *2do.* The Lord Jesus and the whole Mystery of Gospel Truth as centering in him, remaineth entirely hid, until the Eyes be opened by that special and efficacious Instruction, which Flesh and Blood cannot bestow. From all this I only represent, that due Care should be taken through Grace to instruct, and we all ought in the same Manner to lay out ourselves for learning that which the Lord hath revealed, and which we are thereupon to believe concerning Gospel Truth; and no ignorant Person may be encouraged while persevering in Ignorance, whatsoever Flashings of Affection they may have at some times.

Phil. I understand this in some measure, and am of one Mind with you, and shall only add, that I have often, with reference to this, admired the Power of Deceit, that Persons who appeared to be, shall I so call it, touched in the quick by Conviction, and lamented many Evils of Heart and Way; yet few of those I had the Occasion to deal with, did at all regret a Power of Darkness, and Ignorance of the *true God* as revealed in the Word, tho' the Scripture declareth plainly and plentifully, that the Fountain of all our Evils, both Sins and Miseries, lyeth here, since we, in our first Parents, did put out our own Eyes; and I have always found it so, since

since ever the Lord brought me under any Concern about these things. I need not repeat the known and often cited Proofs of this plain Truth, which sound Divines harmoniously acknowledge in their demonstrating and defending our received Principles against contrary Errors and Heresies. But if you think meet, prosecute the Thread where it was left before this Digression.

Nic. 2do. As we should enquire into, receive and believe this sweet and adorable Mystery, as said is; so we ought to use it, as a clear and pleasant Standard, for directing us with respect to other Gospel Truths, and the Rejection of contrary Errors. This is the glorious Source and Sum of the whole Gospel. All true Religion, both as to Doctrine and Practice, is intirely founded here, on which Account Mistakes in this, are, may I so term them Errors of the first Concoction, which are not rectified in the following.

Phil. I believe it is so, and do think it the more strange, that several Divines in good Account, have taken little, and some of them no Notice of this eternal Counsel or Compact, in their treating Purposes which necessarily required so much. And have heard of an Instance of a Divine in some Repute, especially among our Prelatists, who expressly denied this Covenant of Redemption upon a very frivolous Pretext, namely that a Covenant implieth Two different Wills, as if we urged the strict and proper Notion of a Covenant, as it hath place amongst Men. Upon the same insignificant Ground, he might as well have denied a Trinity of Persons in the God-head, because distinct Persons, amongst Men, imply in like manner, distinct Wills. But

as the Testimony of the Spirit of the Lord in the Word is clear in both; so a different *Schesis* of one and the same Will, removeth the empty Shadow of Difficulty, so far as is needful in a Mystery, which we believe to be, as the Word declareth, but do not pretend to comprehend. This by the way; go on if you please in the Purpose under present View.

Nic. I represent then, 3. That it is the Believer's great and delicious Security, beyond what can be thought or expressed, to have all that pertaineth to Life and Godliness, for Time and Eternity, settled in such a sure and glorious Way. It cannot be told how much that his Duty and Dignity, and all that is justly desirable concur and center here, and are enjoyed in the way of believing this sweet Mystery, Take a little Touch in these few Particulars, *1mo.* The same Divine Testimony which assureth us, that God is one God in Three Persons, doth in like manner, display in the Word this eternal Counsel of Peace, as centering in Jesus, and the Insurance of, may I so call it, all and every one of the Elect, their true Interests as inlayed therewith. This is the plain Import of that comprehensive Gospel-Covenant Promise, which containeth them all. *viz. I will be their God, and they shall be my People. This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our Guide, even unto Death. Heb. xi. 5, 6. 2 Col. vi. 5. Psal. xlviii. 14. Jer. xxxi. 33. 2do.* Hence the Believer is at this sweet and great Advantage in the Exercise of Faith; namely, that a direct Believing, through Grace, the Lord's Testimony concerning himself, revealed in this Counsel and the Gospel of Peace, secureth him compleatly as to all his true Interests for Time and Eternity;

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for that it is upon the same Authority, he believeth that which the Lord hath testified concerning himself, and what in this case he hath manifested concerning his everlasting Love to the Soul; seeing the whole Strain of the Covenants of Promise, as founded upon this eternal Compact, doth carry this both under the Old and New Testament Dispensation of that one Covenant; this being the grand and comprehensive Promise of the same, as said is, *I will be their God, I will be a Father unto them.* The Places are often quoted. See these *Jer.* xxiv. 7. 30. xxii. 31. 33. *2 Cor.* vi. 16. 18. *Heb.* viii. 10. 3. This teacheth, and in this manner the Believer is set upon the true Method for Establishment, *viz.* First, and beyond all things, under the Influences of Heaven to seek and wait for Manifestations of the Lord himself, *John* xiv. 21. 22. That *we may be rooted and built up in the Faith* of that, let me so express it, which the Lord is in himself, as he hath revealed himself in the Word, according to his eternal Counsel, and in all the Discoveries which he hath given concerning himself in the blessed Word. It is in an utter Want of Light in this regard, that our Darkness chiefly consisteth, and, may I so term it, the Life of saving Illumination lyeth in the proportioned Supply of this Want. And a further extent of this sweet and radiant Light, will satisfy the exercised Soul to the full, that *he shall be ever with the Lord*, *2 Cor.* iii. 15. 18. iv. 3. 8. *Isa.* xxv. 7. &c.

Phil. I insist not further upon this, expecting that a Print displaying the Covenant of Redemption and Grace, will shortly see the Light, towards the Resolution of several important Doubts, with
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reference to these Covenants. And therefore I proceed to another Head, and would gladly have your riper Thoughts how that the reformed Protestant Doctrine about Creation centereth in the Lord *Jesus*; and also our Duties with reference to it, as in the preceeding Head. I have some poor indigested Thoughts on both, but would gladly have a clearer and more full Account.

Nic Not to enter upon the common place, which is most accurately treated by many renowned orthodox Divines in their Systems, and on other Occasions, I shall give but a little Touch at somewhat of the Doctrine, and then endeavour more closely to shew, how that the whole Substance of it centereth in the Lord *Jesus*. As to the first, I would have you to observe, *imo*. That upon a renewed and more near View of the eternal Counsel of Peace as aforesaid; you will find the true Doctrine concerning the Creation comprehended in what we believe concerning that Compact or Covenant. You may remember, that One God in Three Persons, having, as aforesaid, elected some to everlasting Life, &c. and the Oeconomy of the several Persons having been from all Eternity ordered, as before mentioned; it is manifest, that as all that belongeth to the compleat Execution, was contained, may I so term it with profound Reverence, within the Womb of the eternal Decree; so the Execution of the same doth necessarily take in, not only that which we believe and profess on this Head, but also the whole Sum of the reformed Protestant Doctrine about the other Heads of sound Theology.

Phil. I understand a little of this, and have no
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doubt,

doubt, but that a more clear and thorough View, would go to the Root of that woful spiritual Malady, which gave the Rise to my Doubts and Queries on these Heads; Namely, the Suspicions, Fears and Jealousies of Unbelief. And I must ingenuously declare, That whatsoever I have found of the Cure, it hath pleased the Lord graciously to bestow it in this Manner, as I assuredly expect more, but only of free Mercy, by a further Diffusion of that Light by which the Lord hath in some Measure manifested himself. Yet suffer me, honoured Sir, to propose a little Scruple, as to that which you just now asserted, *viz.* If this Covenant of Redemption comprehend the All of that which belongeth to the Execution, and consequently the Orthodox Doctrine concerning the Creation, the Fall of Man, the whole of Redemption, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, &c. Whence is it *imo.* That divers renowned Divines take very little Notice of that eternal Compact in their Systems and other Writings, concerning the great Salvation; which would necessarily require a particular and close Account of this Counsel of Peace, as the Foundation of all?

2. How shall I understand it, that others, who profess, or do not deny the Orthodox Doctrine about the eternal Covenant, do yet maintain dangerous Errors, to say no worse, concerning free Will, efficacious Grace, Justification, Conversion, and the most considerable Parts of the Divine Oeconomy, in conveying the decreed and purchased Salvation?

3. How is it that several truly gracious Persons, who cordially own our received sound Principles, concerning this Covenant, are yet straitened and find great Difficulty, yea, and to Nature

ture an Impossibility, to attain some Settlement of Faith about other Truths plainly enough inlaid therewith? I might condescend upon particular Instances, with reference to each of these Queries, but that I study Brevity, and Matter of Fact in the Case is known.

Nic. As to the first of your Queries, I sincerely think that some worthy Divines have passed over this great Purpose rather from Inadvertency, than any other Ground, while less Pains are taken, and some follow the Road paved by others, in Systematical Tracts, more than in other things, which they have treated with greater Diligence and Accuracy. Besides, I hope it may be said without Offence of any judicious Person, that the Increase of Light, and particularly, to this grand and fundamental Part of the Gospel Mystery, hath rendered the Labours of some more complete than the Works of others. These renowned Workmen have each of them several Endowments, which appear in a proportioned Excellency of their Works, and succeeding Times are blessed with Discoveries beyond the preceeding. There is no Ground from this in the least to stumble or entertain the Suspicions and Jealousies which an evil Heart of Unbelief would suggest on every Occasion, seeing they who fear God do heartily embrace the Discoveries of revealed Truth in this Matter, when made unto them, 1 Cor. xii. 11. Nay, let us rather admire the wise and gracious Dispensation of the same Spirit, who distributeth to every one severally, as he will.

Phil. It is so; and I would also incline to think, that a mistaking of some Terms used in this Matter,
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as that of *Covenant, Compact, mutual Agreement*, and the like, might have darkened it to some, who otherwise were not opposite to the thing. And it is certain, that such Terms, in their familiar use among Men, undoubtedly bear a Distinction of Substances, or Stipulations and Restipulations of Persons essentially distinct, which cannot have place in this glorious Transaction, wherein all is to be understood, as said is, of Persons one and the same in Essence. And after all, I humbly judge it will be found that orthodox Divines have taken a more general Notice of this Compact, than we have mentioned tho' some have done it more exactly and explicitly than others. But I stay not on this Head, let me have your Thoughts about the next Doubt.

Nic. As to these who profess orthodoxly, in this Matter, and yet maintain anti-evangelical Errors though I shall be loth to stretch my poor Sentiments beyond due Bounds, and am most willing to construct as fairly of Persons and Things as their Nature can bear, and as I would desire to be treated, were the Case my own; yet I must take the Freedom to give my Judgment, as one who hath been under some Depth of Concern about these things; and do therefore humbly and candidly represent.

1mo. That this Counsel of Peace, according to the Account which the Spirit of God hath given of it in the Sacred Oracles, containeth the whole of the Doctrine of Salvation, both Law and Gospel, : being that eternal Ground-Plot, the noble and complete Contrivance, whereof the whole subsequent Oeconomy, or, to express it more plainly, all the following Strokes of an efficacious and saving

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Work of Grace, contain an exact Accomplishment, suited in every thing to the eternal Decree, as the punctual Execution thereof. Hence, *2do*. I am persuaded that whosoever they be, whose *Eyes are opened*, and whom the Lord hath set right, and settled in the Faith of revealed Truth, as to this Covenant of Redemption, must needs be proportionally sound and clear about the whole Execution, and in a peculiar Manner as to the Concerns of the Gospel Covenant. Hereupon I infer, *3tio*. That such, who under a Profession of Soundness, as to this Counsel of Peace, do yet maintain anti-evangelical Errors, exalting corrupt Nature, and intrenching upon the Freedom and Efficacy of converting and sanctifying Grace, or of any Tendency of that sort: Such, I say, are in so far condemned of themselves, for that they own, at least in Profession, that which cutteth the Sinews, and doth really pull up the very Roots of their contrary Gospel undermining Errors, none of which can stand before the true Doctrine concerning the eternal Counsel of Peace betwixt the Lord, and *the Man whose name is the Branch*; and by the way this giveth some Light about a Passage of Scripture, which was long dark to me, namely, *Tit. iii. 10, 11.* and particularly that Clause, *That such an one sinneth, being condemned of himself*. It were hard to understand this of his maintaining Errors or Heresies, which he knoweth to be such; for, tho' I deny not but that this may be in divers Cases, yet it is not always so, nor can such an Exposition consist with that which the Scripture expressly asserteth, concerning that Power of Delusion, to which many
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are given up by the righteous Judgment of God, *to believe a Lie*, 2 *Thef.* ii. 10, 11. And beyond all Manner of Doubt, the Assent, tho' to the wickedest and most absurd Positions, is very strong in this Case, seeing, for what I know, the Power and Efficacy of special and saving Instruction appeareth in nothing more than in clear and satisfying Discoveries of the Fallacy in Events of this Sort. See further as to the Power of Seduction, *Isa.* xlv. 20. *Ezek.* xiv. *per totum*. But the Exposition which I offer is not obnoxious to the proposed Difficulty; seeing whatsoever damnable Errors Hereticks maintain, they are self-condemned, in so far as they profess divers material Truths, and such as cut the Throat of their contrary Heresies. This is no constrained or foreign Sense, but such as all judicious and sound Divines proceed upon, while they adduce the most convincing and pungent Arguments against them from Truths which they yield, and therefore want not somewhat of Effect of that Nature, at times, especially when backed with Power, as it was in the apostolical Days to a great measure; howsoever it is hereby manifestly implied, that they are *self-condemned* consequentially, *viz.* by maintaining so much of plain and material revealed Truth, as is more than sufficient to condemn them.

Phil. That which you last observed giveth me some more Light about a Particular, which often hath afforded Occasion and Matter for various Temptations, and, thro' my Darkness and manifold Weakness, hath put me considerably to it, to keep my Ground, *viz.* not only, or so much, that Atheism should so exceedingly prevail, and that to the most exorbitant Degree, and in the most horrible and

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daring Manner, as that the most execrable Pitches of it should be found under the clearest Light of Gospel Discoveries, and Men of great Wit and Learning should be tainted therewith. I really think, that Men of Parts are convinced, that the best adjusted Heresies are miserably inconsequential; and that it is a mere and right manifest Impossibility, to knit their Heresies with the Truths which they profess, and sometime pretend to be zealous for; and finding that the more of revealed and fundamental Truth, is owned, the Inconsequence and Crossness of contrary Errors and Heresies is still the more gross and palpable; they therefore recede, and still give up more and more, until at length, observing, that no Heresy whatsoever is consequential, and that the Light which discovereth any Part of fundamental Truths, which even the very worst of Hereticks own, doth equally confound and condemn their Heresies; they therefore desperately break the Yoke, and reject all at once; especially after that the dreadful and stinging Checks of a debauched and guilty Conscience have rendered the Thoughts of a Deity exceedingly terrible. Hence, were it possible, they would quite extinguish all natural and revealed Light concerning these great Matters, and put out the Eyes of Conscience, that it may be out of all Capacity to read their dreadful Ditty. And I doubt not but that many are given up of God so far, as a stupenduous, but just Punishment of their rejecting clear Light, tho' they carry it with that Smoothness, and put on such specious Vails, as their respective Interests in the World are thought to require. But now let me hear your Thoughts upon my Third Query.

Nic. It was this, if I rightly remember, Whence is it that gracious Persons, who believe this eternal Counsel, are yet straitened, and can hardly reach a necessary Settlement in the Faith of other great and important Truths therewith inlayed? I answer briefly, *imo.* That in the Course of my own Wrestlings, I found the Source and Cause of this to be a great deal of Darknes yet remaining, as to a Deity revealed in the Gospel; for that, as the same Light which manifesteth the true God, One God in Three Persons, discovereth in the same Manner this Counsel of Peace; so a further and clearer View of the same eternal Compact displayeth the Truths therein inwrapped, in a sweet Proportion: And thus the Believer is settled more and more about all at once, and the Divine Authority of the written Word, wherein they are revealed. And as all these Truths concenter in Jesus, so further and clearer Manifestations of Christ establish the Soul in the Faith of them all; and so the Power of them is found in an answerable Increase. *1 Cor. i. 20. Eph. iv. 21. Ps. lxiii. 1, 2, 3. &c.*

Phil. But we have digressed some while from the begun Purpose, while you took the Pains, and had the Patience to answer my Scruples; and yet I can hardly account that a Digression, which tendeth so much to the clearing of revealed Truth. However, Sir, if you please, reassume the Thread, and shew me how that revealed Truths, concerning the Creation, do sweetly concenter in the Lord Jesus.

Nic. I need not repeat, and my Repetition would but wrong the judicious and excellent Accounts, which renowned Divines have given of the common Place. I presuppose so much. We know and
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agree, that the more full and adequate Description of Creation is not so much the making Things of nothing, or of no pre-existent Matter, for all Things were not created in that Manner, and the most excellent of the sublunary Creatures, *viz.* Man, was, as to his Body, *formed of the Dust of the Ground*, *Gen. ii. 7. 1 Cor. xv. 47.* The clear and scriptural Account is, That Creation is, may I so call it, a commanding that to be, which before was not, and otherwise could not be. And whether there was any pre-existent Matter or not, all is one in this Case, seeing that presupposed Pre-existent Matter had nothing in it of that which the Lord afterward made it by Creation; and so the Being is the Fruit of a mere Command, and the very same omnipotent Power is required, whether any thing pre-exist or not. Thus the Spirit of the Lord expresseth it in the sacred Oracles, *God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light. Gen i. 3.* And the Apostle *Paul* useth the very word Command. *He commanded the Light to shine out of Darknes; he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Psal. xxxiii. 9.*

Phil. I still understood it so, since the Lord in any Measure opened my Eyes: But I would gladly know of what use this Account of the Thing is, as to the most important and pressing Concerns of Soul Exercises. I see a little Glimmering that way, and that some quickening of Faith in this regard, would through the effectual Operation of the Spirit of God, weaken and pull up the most hidden and fertile Roots of these Sins and Vexations which most easily beset me, yea, and every Evil whatsoever. But I am clouded with Darknes and Confusion,

sion, and both Light and Faith (if any thing) are next unto a nothing with me, which disableth me for giving any tolerable Account of that which I see but very darkly and afar off.

Nic. We have no Cause to Glory, save in our Lord, who *hath chosen the Things that are not, to bring to nought Things that are*, 1 Cor. i. 28. I have as much cause to acknowledge and bemoan my utter Insufficiency; yet let us not faint, whatsoever our Pressures be, but humbly and quietly attend for Light and Life from the Lord. And as to the Purpose in hand, these few Particulars, which are even inlayed with the foresaid Description of Creation, will be found of great Use through Grace, for balancing the Soul as to all that belongeth unto Faith and Obedience, which for the greater Closeness and Familiarity of Conveyance, I shall express by way of Exhortation, *1mo.* Doth the Lord's mere Command make things to be? do not stand at, nor be amused with the Difficulty of any Thing which the Lord hath said. Speak not against God, nor say, *Can he furnish a Table in the Wilderness? Can he give Bread? Can he provide Flesh for his People? Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20.* And when a Work of Grace seemeth to be quite lost in Souls and Churches, away with anxious Fears and heavy Jealousies of Unbelief; our Lord's mere Command *can make dry Bones to live; Ezek. xxxvii. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.* and, O wonder of Condescension! he will do it by commanding his Servants to *prophecy upon them.* Can we be lower than a Nothing? but he causeth Nothings, and, which is harder, the wickedest of all things to be, and maketh the vilest of Sinners the most eminent Saints. Doubtfulness about this,
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and implicit Denyings of it, amount really to the denying of the *Jehovah*; and are no small Part of our ingrained Heart-Atheism. Ah for the strong Remains! 2. As to all our Concerns, and particularly such as are of a spiritual Nature; let us not intangle ourselves amongst the Creatures, nor suffer ourselves to be tossed hither and thither, as Appearances afflict or flatter in that regard. It is the Lord's Command which maketh Things to be, and nothing shall, or can be, but what he commandeth, and as he commandeth it. Him then only we are to regard, and have no Shadow of Ground for further Solicitude. *Our God is in the Heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased, Psal. cxv. 3.* 3. This striketh at the Roots of Pelagianism, however subtilized, and under whatsoever Disguise. Hath every Creature as much of Dependence as of being; for otherwise it might have something independent? it must be then a real denying of *Jehovah* the Author of all Being, to ascribe any Sufficiency to the Creature, especially for Things spiritual; and yet more, when of a more excellent and saving Nature. Great then must the Evil and Danger be, when the Strain of Doctrine runneth that Way; sure the Spirit of God carrieth it quite otherwise in the Scriptures of Truth, and cleareth in *Terminis* what I advance. *I create the Fruit of the Lips, Peace, Peace, to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, &c. Create in me a clean Heart, &c. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, as of ourselves, to think anything, &c. Is. lvii. 19. Ps li. 10. 2 Cor. iii. 5.* 4. Hence the true and evangelical manner of going about any commanded Duty; yea, I shall say that which becometh Creatures as such, is, through

through Grace, humbly and quietly to attend upon the Lord, that he may command that to be which he hath promised and doth require; and that not only in the Ground-Work and Entrance; but also in every step of the Progress. For Example, in Prayer and Meditation, and the same holdeth in other Christian Duties, to attend upon the Lord for his giving, and I may say creating, the first and every succeeding Thought, every stirring of Faith and the other Graces of the Spirit, every spiritual Motion and every Word, according to the great and precious Promises of the Gospel Covenant. I think not that it will be necessary I should confirm this, the whole Strain of the Gospel carrieth it manifestly. *We know not what to pray for as we ought, &c. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, as of ourselves, to think any thing, Rom. viii. 26. 2 Cor. iii. 5. 6. &c.* And this I understand to be praying in the Holy Ghost, meditating or singing in the Spirit, for the same holdeth in all Acts of immediate Worship and every Part of Christian Obedience, namely, such a Performance, that the whole is the Spirit of the Lord's Work, and also the Believer's Attendance upon him for it, as much from the Lord as any thing. *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. John. xv. 5. Gal. ii. 20. 1 Cor. xiv. 15. Jude 5. 20, 21.*

Phil. I agree with you, but I have often heard this Way of entire Dependance, spoken of as peculiar to the Covenant of Grace, and suiting its Nature, in Contradistinction to the Covenant of Works. I would gladly have your Judgment about this ordinary Remark, much valued, even by Persons of Note, and exercised to Godliness, and yet I could
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not give a full Echo to divers Observes of this Sort, which I have heard and read ; but let me have your riper Thoughts.

Nic. I am at a Point, that as every Creature hath as much of Dependence as of Being, so the Acknowledgment of this Dependence was as truly and as much required under the first as under the second and Gospel Covenant. I heartily acknowledge Man's Primitive Integrity, and that he was endowed with all that Perfection which became a Creature ; but still I aver, that no Creature, how perfect soever in its original Constitution, was, or could be, in any respect, independent. Nor was any of them excused from the strong and clear Obligation to acknowledge this, by actual depending upon their Lord, in and for every Thing ; and I sincerely judge, that Sin both entered at first, and hath ever since had its Increase and Progress by the Creature's subtracting itself from the foresaid Acknowledging its Creator, in a way of actual and entire Dependence. This is manifest in the lamentable History of our Sin and Fall in our first Parents, who in their whole Conduct about the first Temptation, leaned to themselves, and never once brought the Matter before the Lord, or acknowledged him in the least. *Gen. iii. 1, 2, 3. &c. 2 Cor. xi. 1, 2, 3.* As to the fallen Angels, I know not much concerning the Particulars of their Sin, only their *leaving of their first Estate*, *Jude 5. 6.* implieth in it all that I assert, as will appear, if rightly considered. And to be plain with you, dear Sir, I think, that the Wickedness, of which I am speaking, is, let me so express it, an essential and chief Constituent of every Sin as such ; and I
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can not exprefs it fo significantly as in the Words of rebellious *Pharaoh*, recorded in Scripture, and which clearly represent the Nature of Sin as fuch. *Who is the Lord, that I fhould obey his Voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey him, Exod. v. 2.* But not to infift, if every Creature hath as much of Dependence as of Being, it is no ftrained Confequence from thence to infer, that rational Creatures, whom the Lord hath fitted for the Acknowledgment of this Dependence, by giving them a rational Being, are abfolutely and indifpenfibly obliged to fo much: And I pofitively judge, that our refufing to do fo, is a chief Part of the Venom of every Sin.

Phil. How then do you diftinguifh the two Covenants in this! For you feem to confound them, and that in a moft important and material Concern.

Nic. I place not the Difference in the Nature, but in the Manner of Dependence. The firft Covenant required, that Dependence upon the true God, One God in Three Perfons, as our Creator, the Giver and Preserver of our primitive Integrity. The fecond bringeth the Soul to that fame Dependence, but upon the true God, One God in Three Perfons, as the *Reftorer* of Man, the only *Contriver* and Author of his *Redemption*, according unto the Covenant of Redemption, and the plainly revealed Oeconomy thereof. Diftinguifh then betwixt Dependence upon God Creator, and upon God Redeemer, and your Objection is answered. The Scripture is plain, *I live, yet not I, but Chrift liveth in me, &c. Gal. ii. 20. Every Branch that beareth Fruit in me, for this the Words may imply, he purgeth*

purgeth, &c. Without me ye can do nothing, John xv. 1, 2, 3, &c. Thus the Gospel Covenant Dependence leaneth wholly upon Jesus.

Phil. I am refreshed with the Account, yet somewhat of Difficulty remains, and I would gladly have this important Purpose set in a more full and clear Light. It would seem that by this Scheme you put Believers much upon a Level with our first Parents, in their pure and primitive Estate. It was their Life, and ours in them before the Fall, to depend upon One God in Three Persons, as afore-said, in a Suitableness to the Covenant of Works; and the gracious Person's Life lieth in the like Dependence suited unto the Covenant of Grace. Thus your Scheme seemeth to equalise them as to the Thing; both live by entire Dependence, tho' you acknowledge a Difference in the Manner.

Nic. Your Objection hath indeed a specious Shew; but a just Comparison will soon discover the Invalidity. Let us but refresh our Memories by a renewed View of the forementioned Maxim, *viz.* That every Creature hath as much of Dependence as of Being; and upon this Ground let us balance the Matter equally upon either Hand. Our first Parents, before their and our Fall, were upright and in a State of Perfection, without the least Mixture of Sin, and so were in case perfectly and thoroughly to depend in a Suitableness to the Scope and Tenor of the first Covenant; and thus they enjoyed, but only of free Bounty, a Plenitude of Influences, such as passeth our shallow Reach to comprehend. But Matters are quite otherwise with the Believer; I need not tell you how strong the contrary Tides are, which, especially with the proportioned Winds of Temptation

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tion blowing upon them, do carry even the most eminent amongst them the quite contrary way, *Gal. v. 17. Rom. xvii. 18, 19, &c. Heb. iii. 12 Mark ix. 24.* Faith, at best, hath the woful Attendant and heavy Weight of *an evil Heart of Unbelief*, which keepeth Matters at a low Ebb with us, both as to a Gospel Dependence, and the Influences which the Lord bestoweth in that manner, but only of free Mercy through Christ.

Phil. We have now insisted for some while upon the Description of Creation in general, and I judge not unprofitably. I shall not put you to account for the received Protestant Doctrine: Only in a Suitableness to the Design of our Communings, I would gladly be further instructed, how that all these Truths concenter in Jesus.

Nic. I see no great Difficulty here. The Testimony of the Spirit of God in the Scriptures being plain and abundant, yet because the Subject, as others of this Nature, is very sweet, I shall give a few Hints upon it. We believe one God in three Persons to be the glorious and alone Creator, and in particular that the Lord Jesus, the second Person of the adorable Trinity, one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, did create all Things. *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, &c. All things were made by him, &c. John i. 1, 3.* By him who is the Image of the invisible God, were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, &c. *Col. i. 15, 16.* But I cannot think that you are at any considerable Difficulty on this Head, and for my part, I can add nothing to the excellent Remarks of judicious and sound Divines, who have treated these Purposes with great Accuracy. *Phil.*

Phil. I have not any Difficulty about the received Doctrine; though I wanted not my own Tossings about Things referable to this Purpose, which yet I incline not to condescend upon particularly, but shall rather choose to inwrap all in this one Query. In what way doth the solid and saving Faith of this great and sweet Truth discover itself, namely, that our Lord Jesus *made all things*?

Nic. Before I answer more closely, I think it proper by way of Caution to represent, that nothing is intended in prejudice of that Oeconomy of the Three Persons of the adorable Trinity, which the Scriptures plainly reveal, and is most necessary to be known and believed, in order to a just Idea of the Gospel Covenant, and towards the Concerns of Life and Godliness. According to this blest Oeconomy, Creation is in a particular Manner ascribed to the Father, Redemption to the Son, and the entire Application of the same to the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, as the received Maxim of sound Divines holds, namely, That these external Works are common to all the Persons, so the particular Ascription of Creation to the Lord Jesus, being mingled with Faith, is in a peculiar and efficacious Way effectual in these following Particulars. *1mo.* This maketh a viewing even of the Works of Creation exceedingly pleasant and strengthening. Who can express how ravishing it is to behold in some Measure the Glory of Christ in every Creature! This, among other Things, rendereth even an ordinary View of Creatures wonderfully delicious, and the Believer findeth himself thereby brought as it were over into another World, and breathes in a more free and heavenly Air, even

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while intangled amongst the Creatures, being surrounded and satiated with the Glory of Christ, his Meditations of him are sweet, *Psal. civ. 34.* and he is *glad in the Lord*. Thus, the Afflicted and Overwhelmed, pouring out his Complaint, addresseth himself to the Lord Jesus, *Of old hast thou laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thy Hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure, Psal. cii. 25, 26.* compared with *Heb. i. 10. Psalm xcii. 4, 5, 6.* In this manner the true God, as manifested in Christ, is seen and honoured in his Works, and the Believer triumpheth in his Praise.

Phil. You well observe this, and howsoever I continue to be much a Stranger to the Experience of the thing; yet the Evidence of the Truth is satisfying to me, in so far that I see here a sweet and clear Answer to the ordinary Complaint of gracious Persons; namely, that the Creatures prove diverting to them, and blunt their Edge. Assuredly this ariseth not from the thing, but is a mere Effect of Abuse on our Part; otherwise our beholding of, and Business with the Creatures, would be no Hindrance, but quickening to us, in so far as we are taught to keep the Rule, and to view the Lord Jesus in his Work. But proceed, if you please, in the Purpose under our present View.

Nic. 2do. The Faith of this sweet Truth displayeth itself in a pleasant committing the keeping of our Souls unto him as unto a faithful Creator, *1 Pet. iv. 19. Our Maker is our Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name, and our Redeemer the holy One of Israel, &c. Isaiah liv. 5.* Both the first and new Creation are our Lord's and Redeemer's Work: His excel-

lent Glory shineth illustriously, and ought to be acknowledged, admired, and delighted in, as shewed forth in both. This wonderfully sweeteneth the Believer's Life, by his seeing and eyeing the Lord Jesus in every Thing. And when in a suffering Lot, or by the Prevalency of Temptations upon *an evil Heart of Unbelief*, all Probability of the Accomplishment of that which the Lord hath promised, may utterly vanish, while the Lord's and the Believer's Enemies carry all before them, and the new Creature may be very low, and scarcely in case to breathe under the Load of Temptations and Troubles, the Lord in the mean Time hiding his Face, *Psalms* lxxiii. 13, 14, 15. and lxxvii. 8, 9, &c. yet he is a *faithful Creator*; a Creator whose mere Command made the new Creature to be, which before was not; and therefore there is no want of Power on his Part; and a faithful Creator, who hath given his Word, yea his Oath, and hence will make it good, for *he cannot deny himself*. Here we have the important Duty displayed, in such a Manner, as hath the clear and satisfying Removal of all contrary Objections inlaid with it. What should discourage us in well-doing, *and committing*, by Faith, *the keeping of our Souls*, our better Part, which fitly denominateth the whole, *unto the faithful Creator*? *Isaiah* xxvii 3. *John* x. 1, 2, 3. He made us *new Creatures*, when we had nothing of that noble *Being*. He preserveth and cherisheth his own Work. And as to whatsoever may be excepted from its lowest, most afflicted and perplexed Estate, though it were reduced to a meer *Chaos* of Confusion in Souls and Churches, it sufficeth to answer, that our Lord and Redeemer is a faithful Creator; the

the Faith of this goeth to the Bottom of all Difficulties whatsoever, according to its Measure, and pulleth up the most latent Roots which bear Gall and Worm-wood. I would further insist, but that several Things to this purpose have been taken Notice of before, and will fall in afterward.

Phil. I think so, and therefore shall delay that which I would further enquire, until a more fit Occasion. Only it is pleasant to observe, how that the Spirit of the Lord in the whole Strain and Tenor of the Gospel depresseth corrupt and proud Nature, and battereth down the great Dagon of *Pelagianism*, whether more gross and open, or howsoever subtilized and covered with a specious Veil. Here the Creature appeareth to be that which really it is; an empty loathsome Nothing, and whatsoever Gifts and Graces the Believer may enjoy, yet none of these nor all of them in themselves, can keep the Soul, and they will assuredly disappoint our strongest Expectations, when leaned to in the least. It is only our Creator, and faithful Creator; who giveth, preserveth, and cherisheth natural Life; but in a peculiar manner that which is spiritual. *He keepeth and watereth his Vineyard every Moment. Isa. xxvii. 2, 3. John xv. 5. Gal. ii. 20. &c. Toward him as the faithful Creator, and to him alone, must we, and only through his Grace, look, as without whom we can do nothing: But I insist not in plain Purpose, the scriptural Evidence is abundant. But having protracted this Communing to a considerable length of time, I think we may delay the further Prosecution to another Occasion.*

D I A L O G U E VI.

In which the same Purpose is prosecuted, and the Suspicions, together with various Fears and Jealousies of Unbelief, upon the Head of Providence both common and special, are proposed and discussed, by shewing how that Truths and Duties do also as to this concenter in Jesus.

Phil. **S**EEING now we have a renewed Opportunity of communing together with some Closeness, I heartily embrace the Occasion, dear and honoured Sir, and shall through Grace, with wonted Freedom and Alacrity, lay open my whole Heart as to whatsoever I can remember hath been clouded by Suspicions raised about the Disposition of Providence. And bear with me to propose that which is upon my Heart, in an earnest Request of being further instructed as to these following Particulars, *1mo.* I would have you to give me a Touch at the Scriptural Account of Providence; and I crave but a few Hints, because great Divines have treated the common Place with much Closeness and Accuracy. *2.* I desire to be taught how that Truths and Duties on this Head, concenter in Jesus, by a more general Account of the Thing. *3.* I would crave leave to propose divers particular Cases, which have been straitening to me as to my own Concerns, with reference to adorable and spotless Providence, and all suiting the Scope of these our Communings.

Nic. For the first of your Demands, I am satisfied that you expect not from me an Account of the theological Head, some eminent Divines have treated

treated it very scholastically, and soared higher than my poor Capacity could follow them. I design but a very slender Touch, which yet I shall labour to express in a plain and simple way; notwithstanding I shall, in that Manner, give my Thoughts about the greatest Difficulties which affect the Head, so far, I mean, as my Tossings, and somewhat of the sweet Issues of the same may amount to. In order to this I must necessarily lay down some *Postulata* or *Grounds* acknowledged amongst us on either hand and such as, if need were, might be easily made out against any Opposer. And these I purpose to cast into a very easy Method; namely, that all the subsequent shall follow upon the first, as native plain and easy Consequences. I presuppose then *1mo.* That our God, One God in Three Persons, is intirely and in all things self-sufficient and independent. This the very glimmering of Nature does discover concerning a Deity, and the ordinary Demonstration from the Sub-ordination of Causes do make it out directly; as I might without any Difficulty instruct, were it my present Business. I rather take Notice, that the Name *Jehovah* peculiar to the true God, not only implieth, but directly signifieth so much. *Jehovah* is Being, or, might I for once be allowed to coin a Word, *Beinger*, or the Author and Cause of all Being, who of himself is Being and hath all his Perfections in himself; so that every thing is from him, and holdeth its Being and all it hath entirely of him. *In him we live and move, and have our Being; of him, and to him, and thro' him are all Things,* *Acts* xvii. 28. *Rom.* xi. 26. 2. All and every one of the Creatures, in all that they are and have, depend in every thing and intirely upon their

their Lord. Being and Dependence in the Creature, are, may I so term it, wholly commensurated, that is, every Creature, as a Creature, and because it is such, hath as much of Dependence upon its Creator as of Being, having nothing in it, but that which dependeth upon the Lord as much as can be; seeing none of them either is, or can be in any regard, independent; and this I take to be, among other things, natively implied in the Scripture Accounts, wherein all Nations are declared to be before the Lord as nothing, *Isa.* xl. 15, 16, 17. *Psf.* lxii. 9. &c. in themselves considered, and as severed from the Lord, *they are nothing and less than nothing, even Vanity*, a mere nothing, deceiving under a false Appearance; seeing their Being, whatsoever they are, or howsoever indued, and all their Motions are wholly derived from the Lord, and do depend entirely upon him. They are nothing in themselves, but have their being and all from the Lord, and hold the same as much of him. 3. Creatures indued with Reason, having more of Being or derived Perfection than others, must needs have as much of entire Dependence, and as they act spontaneously and freely from previous Deliberation, and with a rational Consent, as all agree, so the more they have of all this, their Dependence must be accordingly greater, they having more wherein to depend than others of an inferior Nature. Hence 4. The more freely that free Agents do act, their real Dependence is the greater; because, as in so far they act the more completely, so they have the more of derived Being and Perfection, and consequently of real Dependence, as was above cleared. And in consequence of all, I dare adventure to say

with much Confidence, yet humbly as before the Lord, that the more thoroughly this Dependence is acknowledged by saving Faith (wherein also we depend as much, and some way more than in any thing) we in a just Account act the more freely, because on the most solid Deliberation, and influenced from the strongest and most solid Grounds to a true and practical Acknowledgment of this great and important Truth, often mentioned in these Preliminaries; namely, that we have as much of Dependence as of Being. Thus it appeareth, that the greatest real and acknowledged Dependence, is so far from interfering with true Freedom, that we are never truly free, until, and in so far as this Dependence is acknowledged by us; whereas a practical subtracting ourselves from this Dependence, that is, our denying to acknowledge the same in the Ways which our sovereign Lord hath appointed, (wherein, *viz.* in which Denial, the Venom or Sinfulness of Sin consisteth) is real Bondage with a Witness. *Whosoever committeth Sin is a Servant to Sin.* Rom. vi. 20. John viii. 34. 2 Pet. ii. 20. *When ye were the Servants of Sin, ye were free from Righteousness.*

Phil. I agree with you in this, and do sincerely think, that in Heaven, where assuredly perfect Liberty hath Place, the Acknowledgement of this Dependence is accordingly complete. *The four and twenty Elders fall down before him that sitteth upon the Throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their Crowns before the Throne* Rev. iv. 10. vii. 15. xxii. 3. &c. And howsoever brutish Men know not, neither do Fools understand this; yet all who have any Discerning or Experience

ence of these things, know, and find; that their greatest and sweetest Liberty conspireth amicably with their most absolute and entire Dependence in a way of Believing. But have you any more *Postulata* to clear and lay down?

Nic. 5to. I shall subjoin but one more, namely, That no Sinsfulness of the Creature can in the least diminish its real Dependence, for, though in this Case the Sinner refuse to acknowledge that Dependence, in the Ways which the Lord hath appointed, yet this can not subtract him from the least part of the same, which every Creature, as such, hath upon its Maker and Lord; *Every Knee must bow at his Name, of things in Heaven, of things on Earth, and things under the Earth*, Phil. ii. 10.

Phil. I am so much the more refreshed with these *Postulata*, or Grounds previously laid down, for that you have given solid and satisfying Proofs of them, and that I foresee their Usefulness, if the Lord will, for clearing several important Cases, of which I have some poor and indigested Thoughts, but have often been sore harrassed and sadly involved into much much Sin and Trouble, through my Indistinctness and Confusion, together with a Power of Unbelief, which is the Source of all my Evils, *Heb.* iii. 12. But before I proceed to any Particular, of that sort, as it may please the Lord to direct, I desire at least some Hints about that which is particularly intended in our Communings, *viz.* How that these Truths, which we believe, and are ordinarily taught by orthodox Divines, concerning Providence, do pleasantly meet and concenter in the Lord Jesus.

Nic. A small Hint at this may serve, seeing judi-
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cious and sound Divines have not been wanting to clear and demonstrate the Position about which you enquire, to excellent Purpose, and at considerable length; what is there in Providence which the Scriptures ascribe not to the Lord Jesus? *He upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power. His Throne is for ever and ever; a Scepter of Righteousness is the Scepter of his Kingdom, Heb. i. 3, 8. Col. i. 18.* He is before all things, and by him do all things consist. But I need not, and would but abuse your Patience, should I insist on a Purpose so plain and easy. *I, saith our Lord Jesus, and my Father are one, John xvi. 38.* It is enough that the three Persons are one God; and hence Providence is common to them all. Nevertheless I cannot omit to remind you of one Passage, which is very plain on this Head, and hath been sometimes made sweet to me, *viz. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work, John v. 17.* The immediate Occasion on which our Lord spoke this, was the Jews their persecuting of him, and seeking to slay him, because of a very merciful Dispensation of Providence, namely, the curing of that impotent Man, who had lingered at the Pool eight and thirty Years, and they clearly express, being considered in their Connection, a tender and provident Care in preserving poor tossed Creatures amidst Distresses of a very long Continuance, and the bringing of long depending and desperate like Cases to a happy Issue; sweet is the Persuasion of our being under the tender and efficacious Care of his Providence, *who himself suffered, being tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 18.* But I have little more to represent to you in the general, excepting that

that which eminent Divines have taught at large, and to much better purpose. If you have any thing to enquire into more particularly and closely, I shall willingly hear you, that we may jointly attend upon the Lord for Light in the Matter.

Phil. This is that which I intend, but I shall not carry it beyond the Exigences of my own poor Wrestlings. And to my Shame I must acknowledge, that my weak Faith hath been frequently intangled in the Thickets of Temptation about Providence, but my Darkness and Confusion are so great, that I am afraid, lest I be not in Case to propose, with tolerable Distinctness, that which notwithstanding is much upon my Heart. Yet I shall essay, and first, as I confess with Shame and Sorrow, that my Heart is ready to fail, and my weak Faith staggereth under present or feared Distresses, especially when I apprehend their being carried to an extreme Height; so I would gladly have your Thoughts about this Case, *viz.* What Light doth the Doctrine of Providence, as concentring in Jesus, afford towards the Prevention of Fears and Faintings under Tentations and Troubles, or draining them out from the Heart, when sunk under them, especially when the Distresses are great, and no Issue appeareth?

Nic. The Grounds laid down, lead us clearly to these following Particulars, 1st. The premised *Postulata* cleared, that every Creature is intirely, and in every thing, at the Disposal of, and under a sovereign, holy, wise, and efficacious Care of Providence, the very Hairs of our Head are numbered: *Mat* x. 28, 29, 30. There are no Contingences with Respect to Providence, howsoever many things be reputed so as to us. *The Lot is cast into*
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*the Lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. Prov. xvi. 33. Free Agents, yea, and the wickedest of all, the Devils, their Slaves and Instruments whatsoever, and in the Practice of their most atrocious and devouring Wickedness, are still under a sovereign and holy Disposition. Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, and People of Israel, could effectuate nothing, but what the Hand and Counsel of God had before determined to be done. Acts ii. 23. iv. 27, 28. But not to stay longer upon the Doctrine, it is manifest, that these Truths being mixed with Faith, are most quieting, strengthening, and refreshful amidst the greatest Distresses, howsoever dark the Issue may be, which on that very Head, affordeth the larger Field for Faith to act its part upon. 2. Hence it natively followeth, that none of these Waves, shall, or can, so much, as one Hair-breadth, exceed the Bounds which our sovereign Lord hath set. It is most quieting to the harrassed Mind, to consider, and through Grace to believe, that every thing in his circumstanced Case, is ordered and over-ruled by wise and spotless Providence, whatsoever his Temptations and Troubles be, they shall rise no higher, nor laste a Moment longer than the Boundaries set from all Eternity can allow. Exod. xii. 41, 42. Phil. iv. 6. *It came to pass, at the End of the Four Hundred and Thirty Years, even the self same Day it came to pass, that all the Host of the Lord went out from the Land of Egypt: It is a Night to be much observed, &c.* There is no Ground for anxious Care about any thing, howsoever the Wicked in their insnaring and persecuting Courses, and tho' the Night of Temptation should be thought long, whether*

whether the Trials be disposed by Instruments, or by the Lord in a more immediate way, there is no place for Anxiety: Let us *attend upon the Lord* in his own way, and *rest in him*, they will end, *Isa. l. 10. Ps. xxxvii. 17.* The Enemies of the Lord will *fill up the Measure of their Iniquity*, the Sky will clear in due time, and the Clouds of Temptations and Troubles shall be dispelled, *Mat. xxiii. 32. Ps. xxx. 5.* Who is solicitous about Day or Night, Summer or Winter, or thinketh that the one or other will exceed the determined Bounds, and were it not the woeful Prevalency of an evil Heart of Unbelief, we would look upon every other thing, and in particular, all that the Lord hath promised, whatsoever it be, and that in special, about which we have the greatest Struggles, as under the same sure Decree, and efficacious Care of the wise and gracious Providence of our God, *who worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will. Ps. xxxiii. 11. Prov. xix. 21. Isa. xlv. 10. Eph. i. 11.* O how quieting is this! It cannot be told, particularly when it is considered, that the whole Disposition is in the Hand of our glorious Lord, Head and Husband. 3. The Faith of this engageth the Heart still more strongly to the Lord's Way, by draining out from it that perplexing and anxious Solicitude about Events, which as a heavy Weight sadly cloggeth us, and joineth Issue with these Temptations, by which the Mind is quite rankled, and shall I call it, disjointed, and so altogether unfitted for Service; whereas, all this would be happily prevented, or remedied by the solid and strong Persuasion, that the Lord will turn all to a good Account, to his own Glory, and for the Good of
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all those that wait for his Salvation. *Rom.* v. 3, 4, 5, 8. 28. *Jer* xxxi. 3. &c.

Phil. I am satisfied and persuaded, that if these Truths were mingled with Faith, and that we viewed the sweet Will of Christ in every part of his providential Disposition, our Minds would be not a little sweetened by that which otherwise procureth Fainting and Fretfulness. But now seeing we are entered so far into our familiar Communings about *Providence*; suffer me to propose whatsoever I have been, or am straitened about, in any manner of way, with reference to it, and I hope you will bear with my Weakness, tho' you may think several, or most of my Scruples to be but mean. I freely acknowledge that they proceed from a great deal of Darkeness, and secret heart Atheism on my Part; yet providing that grand and comprehensive Malady may be cured, I shall not stand to take shame to myself, in acknowledging the Evil, though it were in the View and Audience of the whole Universe. You know, honoured Sir, that much Dust is raised about the determining and efficacious Influence of Providence upon the free Actions of rational Agents. Necessity and Liberty are Contraries, as the very Nature of things doth manifestly imply, and yet, the received Doctrine of the reformed Churches bringeth Liberty itself under a manifold and irresistible Necessity, of which I shall give some Instances in these Two Particulars. 1. The eternal Decree, and a proportioned Execution thereof in Providence, are of an universal Extent, they reach every thing, and every thing must be, to the very minutest Circumstance, as ordered by them. 2. The free Agent can move in nothing, but as moved; and for as much as, the preder-

predetermining Influence of a sovereign Lord can never be in vain, but must always reach the designed Effect, whether in natural, such I mean, as act by Necessity of Nature, or in free Agents. What place is left for Liberty? The Lord is the Author of every Being, he is the sovereign Worker in every thing, and that which he worketh, must needs be, his Work produceth the things which are, whatsoever be the Agent; Where then is Liberty? I cannot give my Doubts a quaint and scholastical Tour, but I hope you will understand them.

Nic. I understand your Meaning, and doubt not but that a second View will quickly discover the Fallacy of your Argument; for *1mo.* It proves too much, and that which is little, if at all remote from downright and explicit Atheism, and therefore it can evince nothing. I would have you then to remember, *1mo.* That a Necessity of Futurition floweth as much from the Divine *Prescience* as from the *Decree* and Efficacy of *Providence*, that is, it followeth as certainly, that the things which the Lord foreknew from all Eternity, shall assuredly be according to that Foreknowledge, as the same followeth from our received Doctrine, about the divine Decree and Providence. *Acts* xv. 18. And hence Necessity and Liberty must either be acknowledged to be consistent, or this Prescience must be denied, which were the same as if you denied a Deity. And what would you make in this Case, of all the Prophecies, but mere empty and uncertain Conjectures? But I weary to insist upon so plain a purpose; only consider again, 2. That this Certainty of divine Prescience, must either be founded upon the Decree, or it can have no certain Foundation in any thing

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thing. Assuredly the *Vertumnus* of our Adversaries their pretended *indifferent Liberty* can afford no Ground for it, seeing no Reckoning can be made upon such a Changeling, a meer *Proteus*, which may turn to all the Points of the Compass in a Moment, and nothing else can have either Certainty or Being, save that which the Lord gives them according to the eternal Decree. But I encroach upon your Patience in staying upon such a silly Quibble.

Phil. Not all, and if you please to bear with me, I have somewhat to except against that which you just now said about the divine Prescience; Namely, that there is a manifest Difference betwixt that Necessity of the *Event*, which resulteth from the Certainty of the divine Prescience, and that which floweth from the Decree and Providence; for tho' a Certainty of the Event may be justly deduced from the Prescience, as aforesaid; yet the Prescience hath no Influence upon the free Agent, who notwithstanding thereof, retaineth his full Freedom, and acteth accordingly with as much *spontaneous Indetermination*, as if there were no such Prescience. But Matters are stated quite otherwise with the Decree and Providence, which must needs have a determining Efficacy, and you freely acknowledge so much; hence I conclude, that the latter infringeth Liberty, tho' the former doth not.

Nic. Your Exception hath an Air of Subtilty, but no solid Strength, and laboureth still of the mortal Disease, which killed the former Argument, *viz* It proveth too much, and therefore can make out nothing. Pray, good Sir, would you exalt Liberty to so high a Pinacle, as to deny all Influence

ence of a higher Cause upon it, and settle the free Agent upon a Throne of Independency, at least, as to all his free Actions, and consequently in the better and more noble part; or if you think this a Stretch, because you will grant a sort of Influence both *Physical* in preserving the *Agent*, and other things of the like Nature, and also *Moral* upon the *free Action* itself, even as free, only denying a determining Influence, which, you will allege, doth contradict *Liberty* plainly and *in terminis*. I would ask but one single Question, *viz.* Whether or not can the free Agent defeat the divine Intention in his Influence, or not? Choose: If you say he can, then we have no more an omnipotent God, I tremble at the Blasphemy; if you acknowledge he cannot, then the Influence is of a determining Nature in so far.

Phil. You straiten me, I confess, but still somewhat of Difficulty remaineth; for removing whereof, I would humbly demand a plain and categorick Answer. What sort of *Determination* may consist with *Liberty*, and what not?

Nic. I answer according to the Principle first laid down, that so much of *Determination* as necessarily floweth from the entire *Dependence* of the *free Agent*, can well consist with his Liberty, seeing in our Lord *we live, and move, and have our Being, as some even of the heathen Poets have observed, Acts xvii. 28.* For it is essential to every Creature as such, to have as much of *Dependence* as of *Being*: But such a *Determination* as hindereth the Acting from *Deliberation*, and with a *spontaneous Consent*, and implieth Force, is contrary to Liberty indeed; and howsoever efficacious the Influences of Grace

be, yet they constrain nothing that is in Man, but do effectually carry alongſt with them the moſt pleaſant Aſſent and Conſent of the Soul. *With my whole Heart have I ſought thee, &c. Pſalm cxix. 10. Phil. ii. 12, 13.*

Phil. Seeing we have entered ſo far upon this Head, I ſhall take the Freedom to repreſent, that I have been conſiderably ſtraited to underſtand aright, the Diſpoſal of wiſe and ſpotleſs Providence about ſinful Actions. I have indeed received Light in the Uſe of ordinary means, eſpecially thoſe which a liberal Education, in the good Providence of God, afforded me at home, and while I ſojourned in a foreign Country; and therefore ſhall entirely wave every thing about which I do not remember to have been much diſquieted, and ſhall but touch a little this one Scruple, namely, That the ſcriptural Expreſſions of the Lord's puniſhing Sin by Sin, appeared, thro' the Influence of Tentation, ſomewhat harſh to me for a long Time. I found Inaccuracies in our Tranſlation of ſome, and the Difficulty evaniſhed upon a cloſer View, and a comparing the original Text with other Tranſlations. Theſe I paſs entirely, for that a View of the marginal Readings, and the uſual Comments may ſerve to clear them. One beyond others was of a long Continuance, and ſtraited me, not from any real and intrinſical Difficulty, for I wanted not ſolid and clear Answers, but thro' a ſtrange, and an unaccountable Obſtinacy of an evil Heart of Unbelief, with the ſubtile and ſtrong Workings of Temptation that Way. And forasmuch as this was my only great and abiding Difficulty, I would gladly have your Thought about it. The Place of Scripture which was the Matter

Matter of all these Conflicts, is, *And if the Prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a Thing, I, the Lord, have deceived that Prophet, &c.* Ezek. xiv. 9. I need not propose my Difficulties upon the Place, which I think are obvious, all centereth here, *viz.* That the Harshness of Expression seemeth not very well to consist with that which we are most plainly and plentifully taught concerning the divine Veracity. We know, we believe with our whole Hearts, and profess that our God is the God of Truth, the God that cannot lie; Our Lord Jesus is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. Now, honoured Sir, how reconcile ye an Expression apparently so hard, with the received Faith of all who believe in our Lord Jesus, and the harmonious Profession of all who own the Christian Religion?

Nic. This Objection, how formidable soever it be thought, is but a mere Bugbear. If more nearly viewed, you will find the Expression abundantly plain and congruous; yea, in nothing unsuitable to the ordinary Use with Men, in so far as parallel Cases are found amongst them; for evincing of which, I offer to your more deliberate View these two plain Truths. *1mo.* That Sin is a most righteous, but the most dreadful Punishment of Sin. The righteous Lord giveth up the Sinner to more Sin, as a just Stroke for his former Transgressions. *My People would not hearken to my Voice, and Israel would have none of me, saith the Lord, so I give them up to their own Hearts Lusts, &c.* P^{sa}l. lxxxi. 11, 12. *Because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved, and for this Cause God shall send them strong Delusion, &c.* 2^d Thes. ii. 10. i. 1. *2do.* As the righteous Judge of all the Earth doth
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justly give up the false Prophet, and other Transgressors also, to the Deceits of Satan, and of their own Hearts, so there is no Shadow of Incongruity, but even a Beauty and Glory in the Thing, *viz.* That the Punishment be ascribed to the righteous Judge, tho' Devils, and our own wicked Hearts be the alone Authors of the Deceit. It is a thing most usual amongst Men, and not unbecoming the Dignity of a sovereign Judge, to ascribe the Punishment to himself, tho' inflicted by the Executioner. And whatsoever Bustle our perverse Minds may make about Matters of this sort, especially when rankled by correspondent Temptations, no Shadow of Difficulty would be made about the like Words in the Mouth of an earthly Judge, as to Punishments which he can inflict; I mean, his ascribing the Punishment to himself, *viz.* I will behead, I will hang such a Malefactor, &c. or I have done so. Thus in the present Matter, *If the Prophet be deceived, I the Lord have deceived him.* That is, I as the alone sovereign, righteous, and holy Judge, hath given him over to the grand Deceivers, *viz.* Devils, and his own deceitful Heart. Thus the Lord gave a sovereign, just, and sinless Commission to a lying Spirit to entice King *Ahab* by his false Prophets. *1 Kings xxii. from v. 19.* Assuredly all is plain, and nothing constrained in this easy Exposition. I might enlarge it, and adduce many Considerations for confirming that which I assert, but that I think the Labour were altogether superfluous. Our God is the God that cannot lie; but nothing contrary to this is affirmed, when we say according to his own plain Testimony in the Word, that as the sovereign and righteous Judge giveth up the

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Transgressor to the Delusions of Satan and of his own Heart.

Phil. The Solution which you have given is clear, and I am well satisfied with it. But pray, dear and honoured Sir, is it necessary to render the original Word, by one so seemingly harsh as this of our Translation, *viz. Deceive?*

Nic. There is no Difficulty in that Translation, as I have shewed: Yet it is not rendered so in some, and these very exact Translations, nor is it necessary it should; for both the original Term, and even our own, may easily, and fairly admit a very plain Sense, and no way liable to the least Shadow of Harshness. Namely, if the Prophet be disappointed, or his Expectation frustrated when he hath spoken a thing, &c. “I the Lord have disappointed him, and defeated his false Hopes.” Delusion is confident, and false Prophets entertain strong, tho’ foolish and wicked Hopes; but these Hopes shall be cut off, and prove like the giving up of the Ghost, and the Hand of the Lord shall eminently appear in the Disappointment. Their Expectations are big, they promise to themselves Peace and Safety; and instead thereof, *sudden Destruction shall overtake them.*

Phil. I remember not any more which much straitned me with Reference to the Doctrine about Providence: Yet seeing, though much Darkeness on my part, and a proportioned Influence of Temptation upon a darkened Mind; it hath proven a Field upon which the strongest and most subtile Temptations have acted their several Parts; suffer me to propose so much as I find needful of these various Cases, and I shall labour to contract that which I intend

intend into narrow Bounds with respect to my Proposal. And in the Entry, dear and honoured Sir, let me have your Thoughts in what respects, and how far the Disposal of Providence may and ought to fall under a Christian Concern. I propose this, not so much for that I am straitened about the thing, as the more conveniently to introduce my particular Difficulties.

Nic. The Answer of this Query will be easy, if we advert to the *Postulata*, or Grounds previously laid down, *viz.* That every Creature, as such, hath as much of Dependence upon its Creator, as of Being. 2. That much of the Glory of Christ is displayed in the Disposal of Providence. *All Power in Heaven and in Earth is given to me. Mat. xxviii. 18. Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10.* This Power he exerciseth even as Mediator, and for the Advancement of the Interests of his Kingdom and Gospel. Hence result the subsequent plain and incontrovertible Duties with Respect to Providence, which I shall point at in very few Words. *imo.* We ought to study Providence, and carefully to peruse that Book wherein the Lord hath written very much of his Name. *In him we live, move, and have our Being, Acts xvii. 28 Of him, and to him, and through him are all Things. Rom. xi. 36.* Just and awful is that Threatning, *Because they regard not the Works of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up, Psal. xxviii. 5.*

Phil. May I a little interrupt the Thread of your Discourse, by proposing somewhat with Respect to that which you just now said. I acknowledge, and my Heart closeth sweetly and chearfully with the Duty. But I intreat you give me some Direction about

about the Management, seeing I find it uneasy, and am a very bad Proficient in reading this Book.

Nic. Take then these following Rules, 1^{mo}. Let our whole Concern about Providence be intirely regulated by the Word. This is the alone, and the adequate Rule of Heart and Life, of Faith, Obedience, and every Thing. *Isa.* viii. 21. 2 *Pet.* i. 19. 2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16. No Difficulty, I think, will be moved about this, only I shall take the Occasion to point at some Fallacies which have an insnaring Influence upon the Behaviour even of gracious Persons, and yet are really contrary to this Rule. And seeing the Lord hath not made Providence our Rule, we may not, 1. Have such a Respect to the Aspect of Events whatsoever, as in the least to recede from the only and sure Rule, and to take our Measures as to Duty and Sin from Regards of that Nature which are quite foreign from this Purpose. *The prudent Man doth indeed foresee the Evil*, and useth necessary Precaution, but all must be ordered according to the alone Rule, for there is no other Way of walking surely, but to walk uprightly *Prov.* xxii. 3. 10. 9. *Psa'm* xxv. 21. cxxv. 5. And *they who turn aside unto crooked Ways*, however specious the Pretexes be, *shall be led forth with the Workers of Iniquity*. God abhorreth the carnal Politicks of self-seeking Men, which carry them off from the Rule; and when they have forsaken the Word of the Lord, what Wisdom is in them? Nay, *the Wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable.* *Jer.* viii. 9. *James* iii. 17. 2. Tho' we ought to *keep the Heart with all Diligence*, *Prov.* iv. 13. and carefully advert to the Disposition of our Spirits, desiring and pressing after a holy, humble and tender

Frame at all times ; yet we may not have such a regard to Impressions, howsoever specious and seemingly spiritual, or so far respect our Straitenings and Enlargements, as from thence to decide in the Matter of Truth and Error, Sin and Duty, as we think we have, or want Freedom of Mind. But for as much as the Lord hath given us a sure, full and clear Rule, of Heart and Life, of Nature and Way, we ought accordingly to regard it without intermixing any thing with it, in any Manner, or under whatsoever Pretence. And all our Impressions ought to be carefully examined by this only and perfect Rule, according to which alone, we are to judge of the Goodness or Evil of them. For if we do otherwise, and if the Word of the Lord give not the Rule and Measure in this Case, the two-leaved Gates are opened to Delusion, which wanteth not Abundance of Pretext of this sort to support it.

Phil. I am much confirmed by this first Direction ; go on, if you please, and give me more.

Nic. 2. Would we, through Grace, escape much Sin and Sorrow, and grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by the Study of Providence? it is most necessary to believe firmly, and to hold fast this plain Truth, namely, that the Lord's *Thoughts are not our Thoughts*, nor his *Ways our Ways*; as the *Heavens are higher than the Earth*, so are his *Thoughts higher than our Thoughts*, and his *Ways than our Ways* : *Isaiah* lv. 8, 9. The whole Strain and Tenor of the Word beareth, that it is ordinary with the Lord to bring things to pass in Ways which are above our Reach, and would seem unto our blinded Minds to be quite contrary to that

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which he hath revealed, whether Promises, Threatenings, or whatsoever it be. I think it were superfluous to adduce Instances. *Abraham's Seed* is multiplied as the Stars, after that his Body was dead, and *Sarah's Womb* likewise, so that he could not have a Child without a Miracle, and afterwards the Lord requireth the Sacrificing of *Isaac*. The patriarchal Families were in Straits for Food, when constrained to send to *Egypt* for it, and were in succeeding Times sore oppressed with cruel Bondage in that Land; yea, when brought out, are often encompassed with extreme Danger in the Wilderness: Nevertheless, the Lord's Word is fulfilled, but in Ways becoming himself, and far above us; and therefore we are not to judge of the Conduct of Providence according to our Maxims and Methods, which were really and practically to look upon the Lord as like ourselves. 3. For improving Providence, it is necessary that we hasten not to give our Verdict about it. He who believeth in this regard will not make haste. The Fabrick is indeed excellent; our Lord's *Work is honourable and glorious. He is the Rock, and his Work is perfect, &c. Isaiah xxviii. 26.* But, may I so term it, all the Pieces appear not at once, some Time passeth before the Decree break forth, even in the most weighty and sweetest Concerns of Souls and Churches, and it becometh us well to wait till the Work be brought from off the Wheels; he who would read, and give his Judgment before he view the Letters and Syllables of a Sentence, must needs mistake, and it is Folly on his Part. Our God speaketh great Things by Providence, and in an exact Suitableness to his Word, but it is fit we wait

until he have spoken, otherwise we will quite misconstrue that which is said, and to be further revealed, and thus Sins and Sorrows will accordingly be still upon the Ascendant. The Scripture is plain, and abundantly evinceth that which I assert, *Hab. ii. 2, 3. Deut. xxxii. 4. Psalm cxi. 3. and xxv. 10, &c.*

Phil. It is indeed so, and I have often smarted for my sinful Precipitancy in drawing many a rash Conclusion before I understood the Premises, and yet *an evil Heart of Unbelief* carrieth me sometimes, as with a vehement Torrent, to take Things by the very worst Handle, when the Aspect of Providence appeareth sad and trying. And this continueth notwithstanding that I have been, for what I can remember, still disappointed to the better in Cases so circumstanced, as said is. But proceed, I intreat you, in the Directions.

Nic. 4. Would we use Providence aright, and profit in the Study thereof, we must not think strange that Trials be carried to an Extremity, and that the Waters come in unto the Soul, before the Lord appear and command Deliverances, *Gen. xxii. 14. Psalm lxi. 1.* Difficulties can arise no higher than our God hath from all Eternity determined, and accordingly ordereth them in time to the smallest Circumstance; *for the very Hairs of our Head are numbered, Matt. x. 29, 30.* And, which I would have in a peculiar Manner considered, the lower that the Ebb be, whether with Souls or Churches, the more conspicuous is the Hand of the Lord in the Retrial. When there is no Man, when no Intercessor appeareth, it is most evident, plain and palpable, that only *the Lord's Arm bringeth*

eth Salvation, Isaiah lix. 16. Who but our God alone, who commanded *the Things that are not, to bring to nought the Things that are*; who, I say, but he only, can make the *dry Bones* scattered about the Grave's Mouth to live, and he will do so? *Ezek. xxxvii. 7, 9, &c.* It were a large Theme, and beyond what I dare adventure upon, to undertake a particular Account, how that infinite Wisdom, Goodness, Power, and Mercy, &c. shine forth with an eminent Lustre in this Disposition. *Surely God is good to Israel, Psalm lxxiii 1. xxxvi. 5, 6. Rom. xi. 33, 34, 35.* All that I shall further say upon the Head, is this, *viz.* O let the heavy and dismal Language of Unbelief be for ever banished, yea, and extinguished, namely, *our Bones are dried, our Hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts, Ezek. xxxvii. 11.*

Phil. You touch me near, in this your last Rule, and I must acknowledge with Shame and Sorrow, that my weak Faith cometh to a small Account in the Prospect of Extremities; or when the true Issue of any Temptation whatsoever is quite out of Sight, then, I confess, it is the proper Season to believe; neither doth the Lord leave himself without a Witness in seasonable Supplies of supporting Strength and Refreshment, but still it is attended with the humbling Discoveries of utter Insufficiency on my Part, so that I would presently succumb, did not free Mercy interpose, and were not the Grace of our Lord sufficient for me, *and his Strength made perfect in my Weakness, 1 Cor. x. 13. ii. 12. 2 Cor. iii. 5.* This, I confess, is necessary at all Times, and the strongest Believers have no Sufficiency of themselves; but such Relief in my Case, was still accom-

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panied with convincing and humbling Discoveries of great and unaccountable Weakness in the Habit. But I interrupted the Thread of your Discourse by my last Question, which hath carried us this Length in our Communings; be pleased to prosecute the Purpose, broken off by this Digression.

Nic. Your Query prevented me, and hath brought much of that which I had intended, already upon the Field; I have the less to add, not thinking it proper to repeat that which I presume you know, and is more ordinarily observed. I subjoin then 2. That to preserve or retrieve Matters into some Quietness of Temper as to Providence, especially when we are under great Afflictions, and no Issue appeareth, it is necessary seriously and humbly to reflect. Is there not a Cause? Have we not procured all this? Yea, have we not great Reason to wonder that Matters are not worse, and that we have not long ere now been righteously thrust down into the bottomless Pit? *Our own Wickedness correcteth us, and our Backslidings reprove us, Jer. ii. 17, 19.* and should it not prove quieting, that still *we are punished far less than our Iniquities deserve? Isaiah iii. 9. Hos. v. 5. Ezr. ix. 13.* There is no Comparison in the Case.

Phil. You do well to admonish me of this, and the Lesson bringeth a great Deal of my little observed Guilt under a humbling Remembrance. I would not stand to condescend even upon the Particulars, but that *secret Things belong unto the Lord, Deut. xxix. 29.* Ah! how do our proud Hearts repine in every State, yea, often at the remote Prospects of Difficulty, taking Arms against our sovereign Lord at every Turn, as Israel's Children ordinarily did in
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the Wilderness, 1 *Cor.* x. 9, 10. and in the mean while, scarce any Notice is taken of the lamentable Causes, tho' the Punishment carrieth them written upon it in plain and pungent Characters? As if a Person, who had intangled and sunk himself into a deep Mire, or a Pilot, who by wrong steering had run the Vessel aground, should repine and rage, without ever looking back and acknowledging his wrong, or endeavouring to recover a right Course. Sweet and clear is the divine Prescript. *Let us search and try our Ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us lift up our Hearts with our Hands unto God in the Heavens.* *Lam.* iii. 40, 41. But proceed if you please.

Nic. I might adduce diverse other Particulars, but that I apprehend they may come in more appositely upon such Questions and Cases as you will perhaps propose afterwards. I shall then add but one further Particular, which you may take as a kind of cautionary Direction, namely, 3. That we ought not to think strange of Mysteries in Providence. *The Judgments of our Lord are a great depth. Ps.* xxxvi. 6. lxxvii. 19. *His Way is in the Sea, and his Paths in the great Waters, and his Footsteps are not known.* All Christians acknowledge *Mysteries* in Revelation, and the glorious Gospel is even all *Mystery*: yet it were a great and palpable Absurdity to stumble at Revelation on that Head. Nay, we think the more honourably of revealed Truth, and behold the sweeter Lustre of Glory in it on that very Account; and in particular we reckon it our Glory to own and profess that alone true Religion, which both in Doctrine and Practice is entirely founded upon, and inlaid with the high and adorable

able Mystery of the Trinity of the Persons in the Godhead ; and why should we mistake Providence, because mysterious ? Affuredly, the more of God appeareth in his Word and Works, that they are full of mysterious Wisdom ; let us then with Humility and Modesty search into Providence, as we ought to *search the Scriptures*, not aspiring to be *wise above that which is written*, nor yet neglecting what may and ought to be known. And, as to whatsoever may after all remain much in the dark, not to stagger or quarrel, but humbly and quietly to wait, until the Light of Glory display it. It is enough that we have a good and sufficient Bottom for Faith, and the Lord will preserve and increase that and all other Graces ; so that we have no Ground to be further solicitous.

Phil. I have indeed divers Questions or Cases to propose ; but having stated many or most of them in our third Dialogue, and received much Satisfaction by what then past, I am afraid, lest I should repeat, seeing the Notes are not at present within my reach, and I cannot review them. Yet several Difficulties, and these of great Moment, remain which I shall labour to represent with Candour and Plainness, avoiding unnecessary Repetitions. And seeing I am not much straitened in Point of Light as to all providential Disposements, save that I cannot well understand the Tendency of some Dispensations to the Glory of God, and for the Good of his Chosen ; I shall entirely confine myself to my own Scruples on that Head. I honour the excellent Labours of renowned Divines, who have treated Purposes of that sort, but hope that it will be accounted no Presumption in me to aver, that I should know

my own Difficulties best, and I design to meddle with no other. And therefore, after my former more general Query anent a Christian Concern about Providence, and the Improvement of it, I would adventure to enquire, *2do*. Into what Height of Extremity may a true Church be brought, as the righteous Punishment of Barrenness under a Gospel Dispensation? I speak not of eternal Destruction, having no Doubt but that *God will appear in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know him not, and that obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9, 10. Isa. xxvii. 11.* and I am perswaded that a Power of Darkness under the Light of the Gospel is the very Sink of Hell, and Spring of all Wickedness whatsoever. I understand desolating Strokes, reaching a professing People in common, and some to a very high Degree. You may perhaps think the Question curious; but bear with me, honoured Sir, for that the Proposal is the Result of various Tentations and Tossings about the thing, and other Matters that have some Relation to it, which I need not particularly mention.

Nic. I take it so, and shall with the same Candour impart to you any little Measure of Light, which, through Grace, I have attained, still founding that which I advance upon the *Postulata*, or Grounds laid down in the Entry of this Dialogue. You know, dear Sir, from these *Postulata*, that every Creature hath as much of Dependence upon the Creator, as of Being. Now it is manifest, that the everlasting Gospel hath for its grand Design the bringing of rational, but self-destroying Creatures into a Channel of entire Dependence upon One God in Three Persons, as revealed in the Gospel

Oeconomy. *Gal* ii. 20. *John* xv. 5. *2 Cor.* iii. 5. And I may likewise assume, which yet might, if needful, be easily demonstrated, that this entire Subjection is the greatest Honour and Happiness whereof reasonable Creatures are capable; for when the renitent Principle, that Iron Sinew and Brow of Brass, is broken, the Bitterness of Death is past, Sin and Vexation then are accordingly drained out, and nothing remaineth but that the Believer be pleasantly swallowed up in a Deity, and, through Grace, delight himself for ever in the Glory of Christ, which dawning of Glory in the Soul he also enjoyeth, in so far as the Spurnings of Unbelief and Disobedience are quashed, and the Root of them all is weakened by a growing Illumination of the Mind in the Knowledge of Christ. But not to insist upon a Purpose so very evident to every exercised Person, I only subsume, that the Lord Jesus, in whom all these Blessings are treasured up, doth freely and fully offer himself, and the All of his Salvation in the glorious Gospel, and insisteth, notwithstanding that this great and sweet Offer is generally neglected yea, and rejected wickedly and wilfully by the Bull of these to whom it is tendered, who *will not come to the Lord, that they may have Life.* *Isa.* lv. 1, 2, 3, and xlv. 2. 2. *Prov.* ix 1, 2, 3. *2 Cor.* v 20, 21. *John* v. 40. Thus we wilfully refuse to cast down our Weapons, and subject ourselves to sovereign Lord, but will needs continue in the wonted and wicked Homage to our former Lord and Lovers, with a peculiar Regard to our more beloved Idols, these right Hands and right Eyes which by no means we can be induced to abandon *Mat.* v. 49, 30. and xviii. 8. *Mark* ix. 47. *Phi*

n. 8, 9. Nevertheless, seeing *every Knee must bow in the Name of Jesus*, for so the Word should be rendered, *of Things in Heaven, Things on Earth, and Things under the Earth*, and yet we refuse to bow in a Way of believing Subjection and Obedience; we neither will receive his Testimony, nor accept the Tenders of Peace, and be reconciled to God through Christ. 2 Cor. v. 20, 21. Luke xix. 42. What remaineth? How shall the Honour of One God in Three Persons, be vindicated, who humbleth himself so far in a Gospel Dispensation as to intreat? How shall every Knee bow in this Case? How shall the Honour of sovereign Justice and Holiness be kept entire, and the Sinners Subjection to a sovereign Lord demonstrated? Christ's Yoke he refuseth to take upon him; and what remaineth but that the sovereign Judge of all the Earth display his Justice and Holiness in the most awful but righteous Revenge? When sinful Worms amongst Men, who are clothed with the Honour of sovereign Power, do yet condescend to offer Peace, yea and Promotion, with all the Emoluments they can give, to the wickedest and most despicable Rebels, whom they could quickly root out without the least Difficulty, and send Ambassadors again and again, only requiring that they accept of the offered Peace, and beseeching them to do so, yea, not hastening, but patiently waiting for their Answer, which particulars do never meet in human Transactions, but presupposing that it were so, who could blame them? or, how could Majesty be saved, and these Rebels appear to be under the Dominion of their little Majesties, but by their sending in their Armies, or taking some course, one or other, to destroy them?

I need not apply, see *Nab.* i. 12. *Psal.* l. 20, 21. *Luke* xiv. from 16. *Mat.* xxii. 2, 3, 4, &c.

Phil. Thus you have very much satisfied me as to the Congruity and Glory, yea, and the Necessity of the keenest Strokes, where a Gospel Dispensation hath been clearest and most plentiful, and yet no *Fruits meet for Repentance*, *Matt.* iii. 10. 8. were brought forth. This should quiet the Mind under the most threatening Aspects of Providence that way, and when such Strokes are actually inflicted. But, ah! the Softness of Nature, and the mighty Influence of Unbelief upon it; Yet, that God will pity, who is *the Author and Finisher of Faith*, *Heb.* xii. 2. The Lord hath awfully punished the abuse of Nature's Glimmerings, even in time, both by giving up the politest Nations to the most vile Affections, and grossest of Abominations, and hath also wonderfully brought them down from the highest Pinacle of Power and Honour to a very low and abject Estate, as the Scriptures testify at large, and manifold Experience abundantly confirmeth. *Rom.* i. 25, 26, 27. *Isa.* xxiii. and Chap. 26, and 27. *Jer.* Chap. xlv. Chap. xlvii. and Chap. xlviii. *Amos* iii. 2. And is it not a righteous Thing with him yet much more to punish the Abuse and Contempt of revealed Light? Now it remaineth that you further instruct me, how far these temporal Strokes may go, seeing I have been variously tossed upon the Head.

Nic. I dare not take upon me to answer your Query in the Terms wherein you proposed it, I know not what the Lord may do, but am well assured that he is wonderfully long-suffering: This sweet Truth *Jonah* acknowledgeth, tho' in a pettish Mood, *I knew that thou art a gracious God and*
merci.

merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repentest thee of the Evil; Jon. iv. Ex. xxxiv. 6. and the Scriptures teach it largely elsewhere: The Experience of all Generations hath confirmed it, and this wherein we live is a standing Monument thereof beyond any, all Things being duly considered. Nevertheless, our God is a just and holy God, and it is needful that his Justice and Holiness be displayed, as well in time as beyond it; otherwise a profane and obstinate People would think the God of Glory to be like themselves. But not to insist, I judge it necessary and safe, to as your Query, to consider what he hath done, and to lay our Account accordingly. See both Prophecies, and the Accomplishment of them in some two or three scriptural Instances amongst many others. *Pf. lxxxvi. 5. Joel ii. 13. Pf. v. 4. and 1. 51. Nah. i. 1. 12. Deut. xxviii. Chap. and from verse 20. Lam. v. 1, and Chap. 2, from v. 10. &c. and v. 11, 12. &c. Isa. vi. 9, 10, 11. Zeck. vii. 1, 2, 3, &c. ix. v. 1 King xviii. Ja. v. 17, &c. Psal. ix. 16.*

Phil. I confess these, and the like Instances are clear: But an Exception remaineth, about which I would gladly hear your riper Thoughts, *viz.* That all this was under the Old Testament Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace; but Matters are otherwise stated now, and such awful Strokes in time, have either never been, or at least, were very rarely inflicted, and we have no such cause to be afraid of them.

Nic. I answer, That though the divine long Sufferings be a great Depth, and I dare not take upon me to condescend upon the Extent thereof; yet it is needful, that the Lord be *known by the*
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Judgments which he executeth, and that the wicked be *insnared in th Work of their own Hands*. As to the Difference of the Testaments, I see not of what avail that Consideration is in this Matter; you may remember, that which was touched before, that Sins are aggravated in a peculiar Manner from the Light offered or enjoyed, and against which the Sinner maketh head: This, you know, dear Sir, is the chief Part of the Malignity of that grand and unpardonable Sin which intirely secludeth all Possibility of Relief; namely, it is committed against the most convincing Light, and that which had some Efficacy in producing Fruits like to these which accompany Salvation, tho' really and essentially distinct from saving Grace: And seeing the Light is undoubtedly clearer, which the New Testament Dispensation holdeth forth; a counter-acting the same must accordingly be a Mass of Wickedness, the more highly aggravated, and such as the more thoroughly deserveth most awful Strokes both in time, and a dreadful Measure of Wrath beyond it. As to that which is alleged from contrary Experience, I am not so well versed in Church History, as to condescend upon the Steps of Providence, with Reference to this, in the several Periods of the Church: But sure I am, that Sword, Famine and Pestilence hath pursued the despisers of Gospel Light, and the Ruins of divers, sometime famous Churches, are an awful and lasting Monument and Document of the Lord's just and holy Indignation against the Loathers of that heavenly Manna; *Mat. xi. 21, &c.* Have we so far forgotten our late extreme Distresses, and present sunk, and still sinking Condition, as to move any Doubt on this Head! The
Lord

Lord is indeed wonderfully long-suffering, but the Stroke is heavier when it cometh; *if the Word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a Salvation, &c* Heb. ii. 23 xii. 25, 26.

Phil. I accept your Answer, and I intend, if the Lord will, and as it shall please him to furnish, seriously and gravely to ponder all this before him, and have sweet Hopes that he will, only out of free Mercy, and for his own Name's Sake, further seal, clear and confirm that which you have taught me in a very clear Suitableness to his Word. Suffer me now to proceed to further Difficulties, which have been Matter of Conflict to me, through the various Workings of Temptation upon an evil Heart of Unbelief. I adventure then to move some further Inquiry, and that I may prepare my way, as the Lord directeth, I shall first premise that which the Query presupposeth, and then propose it with the greater Evidence. I presuppose then, 1. That desolating Strokes are inflicted, Sword, Famine, Pestilence, or whatsoever they be. 2. That they are carried to a great Height, and lengthned out to a considerable Extent of Time. 3. That diverse who fear the Lord, have their Share thereof as deep as the Word alloweth, and requireth us to reckon upon. *Quer.* Then, 3. How doth such a Disposal contribute as well for the Believer's Good as to the Lord's Honour?

Nic. For answer, 1. I take that for granted, which the very Terms of your Question imply; namely, That all these Strokes are subservient to the Manifestation of divine Glory. It were superfluous,

fluous, and might import an unbecoming Jealousy of your discerning in these Matters, should I think it needful to make out this. The very Notion of a Deity beareth it. He is *the Alpha and the Omega. The Lord hath made all Things for himself, he is known by the Judgments which he executeth.* Rev. i. 8. Prov. xvi. 4. Rom. xi. 36. Ps. ix. 16. The most awful Strokes are the more visible Declarations of the Justice, Holiness and Veracity of the God of Truth, who hath threatened and foretold all those Things in his Word; and Threatenings must take hold upon an impenitent People, seeing the Word of the Lord cannot be broken. Mat. v. 16. John x. 35. Hence I infer, 2. That it must needs be the greatest Honour, and afford the sweetest Delights unto reasonable Creatures, by Faith to view this, and to be strongly perswaded of the Thing. What greater Dignity can poor sinful Creatures be exalted unto, than to *have that Mind in them which which was also in Christ Jesus*, and all their Desires entirely swallowed up in this one Suit, which likewise was tendered by our Lord Jesus, when his Soul was troubled in the Prospect of a heavy Hour, viz. *Father, glorify thy Name*; Phil. ii. 5. John xii. 27, 28. and when somewhat of this is attained amidst a Complication of various and great Distresses otherwise, as the Exercise of Faith is the more noble, so the Joys are the sweeter, because accordingly pure and drained of Self. 3. This is the great and ultimate End which we ought to eye, and all Believers sincerely propose to themselves through Grace. And seeing the chief End alone giveth the true Measure of real and solid Gain, the greatest Afflictions, and even these which the

Query

Query mentions, do therefore afford the richest Incomes, because, through the Lord's blessing them in a way of sovereign Power and Mercy, they lead the gracious Person the more quickly and efficaciously towards his *All*, or him who only is *All* in *All*. The hotter that a cleansing Furnace be, it purifieth the better.

Phil. This is both certain and evident, and I would fain say, with reference to it, that which was attested in a very perplexing Case, *viz. Lord, I believe, help thou mine Unbelief; Mark ix. 24.* but it straiteneth me the more, that notwithstanding the great Evidence of Truth and Duty in the matter, my Mind should yet continue weighted [under the Prospect of such Strokes, and that Fears thereof should remain disquieting. Ah! should it not thoroughly satisfy us, that the Lord glorify himself! Help me, honoured Sir, to understand this Riddle.

Nic. No Affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous; it cannot be expected but that desolating Strokes, whether felt or feared, must be uneasy to soft Nature, and according to the Believer's Growth in Grace, his Heart will be accordingly the more tender, and deeply affected by threatening Words or Providences. It were a piece of unaccountable Obstinacy and Contempt not to regard the Lord's Threatnings and Strokes inflicted by him; you remember the Import of that dismal Character, *Eph. iv. 19.* But I understand your Meaning, and know that it is only a Power of Unbelief, and much Strength of a penitent Principle, resulting from thence, which you regret, and for a more particular Discovery both of the Case and Cure, I represent the following Remarks.

vexatious Tossings on this Head, is a native and strong Propensity to take our Measures concerning the Believer's Gain, under common and sometimes desolating Strokes, from Appearances and probable Reasonings founded on them, instead of laying the whole Stress upon the Faithfulness of God, who hath promised to make all these and every thing to *work together for the Good of them that love him, and are the called according to his Purpose*, and confirmeth the Truth thereof by a sweet and uniform Track of Experiences, which his Children enjoy in a Way of believing Attendance upon him. But Matters have a quite contrary Aspect, if we judge according to Sense, and the Loss precedeth the Gain, which rendereth us doubtful if ever Meat shall come forth from the Eater, seeing Unbelief and other Lusts do ordinarily never act a more vigorous and troublesome Part, and are never quickened to a higher Degree, by the Subtilties and Furies of Temptation, than when some deciding Stroke is nearest, and the new Creature upon the Point of being more than ever strengthened by a further subduing of these Enemies.

Phil. It is well observed, and I have often found it so ; but my Want lieth not so much in Ignorance of the Malady, tho' I deny not but that I may be deficient even on that Score, as that I am solicitous about the Cure.

Nic. I believe so, and was going on to that Point ; and now that you have given me a direct Occasion, I shall the more freely tender you the following Particulars, by way of Advice for that Effect. 1. Let it be seriously considered, that this, *viz.* the blessed Issue of Afflictions more common or particular, is
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Matter of Faith and not of Sight. Tho' we understand not in what Manner the Thing shall be brought to pass, there is no Ground of doubting from thence, providing the Lord hath said the Thing. *His Thoughts are not our Thoughts, nor his Ways our Ways, Isa. lv. 5. 9.* 2. For strengthening of Faith, with reference to this, it is necessary that Matters be rightly classed, pardon the Weakness of Expression, we ought not to put our Good in the first place, this were contrary to the true Method which the Lord hath plainly taught; and a practical ranversing of that Order cannot escape to expose us to various Shakings: It is enough that Faith hath sure Footing in this; namely, that the Lord hath made all Things for himself, and our true Interests are well secured, as being comprehended in that great one of the Lord's glorifying himself, which can never fail. *Prov. xvi. 4. Rom. xi. 36.* We never seek our real Interests aright, but in so far as we seek them here. O strange Infatuation! Is not our Lord's being the *Alpha* and *Omega* equally evident? *Rev. i. 8.* Assuredly the Testimony of the God of Truth as to both, is one and the same. Hence, the Power of spiritual Fascination is wonderful, that we enjoy not the same subjective Evidence and Comfort of both; we would justly abhor the least Risings of Heart in Doubtfulness about our Lord's being the *Alpha*, and why should we not with as much steadiness of Faith honour him as the *Omega*? And when both are received and sealed by the same saving Faith, all betwixt them is in the same Manner understood to be fully and well secured. Sure our Lord the JEHOVAH cannot miss his End! What then can the Believer desire more? Here is all, and
nothing

nothing of this can fail. 3. I only add, seeing much to this purpose was touched before, that we have this great, sweet and solid Encouragement quietly to await the issue amidst the greatest Troubles and heaviest Prospects, namely, that Matters can never sink beyond an easy Retrival, whensoever it pleases the Lord to appear, they fall not lower than sovereign, wise and holy Providence doth order, without which not one Hair can fall to the Ground; and how low soever the Ebb be, the Lord's Command can quickly *make the dry Bones to live*, as was before observed.

Phil. I am satisfied, and cannot withhold a cordial Assent from the Evidence of Truth in this Matter; yet I must needs bemoan a great Defect of some proportioned Confidence of Faith as to the same: And forasmuch as my Tossings have been great and manifold on this Head, I humbly beg your Patience to hear my further Difficulties, not that I dare adventure to call them Scruples, being satisfied in point of Doctrine, yet my poor weak Faith hath been, and is often, intangled on such Occasions. Know then, honoured Sir, that the bad Success of some gracious Persons in managing a good Cause, with their Distresses and Disasters in the Conduct, have often afflicted me; and therefore I could gladly move somewhat of Inquiry upon the Head. Whence then is it, dear Sir, that Matters sometimes prosper so ill with gracious Persons in the Lord's Cause? *Mat. v. 10, 11. 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14.* I speak not of suffering *for Righteousness sake*, which I repute our greatest Honour and Happiness, but of lamentable Failures, and in some Respects a Succumbing in the Management, or such a Deportment as is not
much

much adjusted to adorn the Doctrine of our Lord and Saviour.

Nic. We are liable to Security in such Cases, and do not so much fear Mismanagements as we ought, and it were truly our Interest to do, and hence we are quickly and easily carried out of these Boundaries which our sovereign Lord hath set. There is nothing, no not the most clear and excellent Things, wherein we stand not in need to have every Step ordered by the Lord, that we may escape Extremes on either hand, even *the Love of God and a patient Waiting for the Lord Jesus*, Ps. xxxvii. 23. 2 *Thef.* iii. 5. Duties excellent and evident, yet require a special Conduct, that we may carry a-right in the Performance: But in Matters which we think plain, and undoubtedly required by the Lord, we are not afraid of our own Spirits as we should be, and easily presume that we cannot go too far in appearing for the Lord.

Phil. I doubt not of the Solidity of your Remark, but it is a General, and whetteth the Edge of my Desire to have a more particular and close Account in what Respects we are in the greatest Danger of miscarrying in a good Cause, and mismanaging the Lord's Matters? I have not any Particular, and far less a partial Design in this, but would gladly be instructed about it, as a thing of great Weight and most necessary Consideration at all Seasons, but more especially in these Dregs of Time, wherein the Corruptions of all Ranks of Persons are strong and aloft, and it is exceedingly difficult to walk both faithfully and wisely.

Nic. I shall chearfully communicate unto you the little that I know of the Deceits of Satan and
our

our wicked Hearts, in this Regard, and at the same time point at the scriptural Rules of Conduct. You know, dear Sir, that our subtle Enemies point at a twofold Design, in their several Engines of Temptation, with Reference to the Matter in Hand, either 1. To keep us wholly off from so much as essaying seasonable Duty; or if they be defeated in this, 2. Their next Game is, to insnare us into such a bad Conduct, even in the Path of Duty, as shall, if they can, render it unsubservient to the End, and carry it a quite contrary Way. Your Query relateth to the latter Stratagem, and as to this we are liable to miscarry in these following Regards. 1. By the mingling in our own Passions, whether inordinate Love, Anger, Fear, or whatsoever they be, with the Lord's Work. Thus our Minds are further darkened, and while we are surrounded and shut in on all Hands with the Steams which arise from our corrupt and disordered Spirit, and the poisonous Mists of Temptation, we quite mistake the true State of Things, and persist obstinately in our Errors, while the Poison worketh. Hence, many Mismanagements, and all from a Power of spiritual Fascination, *Gal. iii. 1. Ja. iv. 1, 2, and i. 20.* 2. These Perturbations are violent, and hurry us into rash and indeliberate Resolves and Measures, which will not bear Weight in the Balance of the Sanctuary, tho' otherwise the Cause as to the main be good. *Pro. xxiv. 29.* The Spirit of the Lord teacheth this plainly in the blessed Word, *He that is slow to Wrath is of great Understanding, but he that is hasty of Spirit exalteth Folly. Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the End, thereof when thy Neighbour putteth*

putteth thee to Shame. Prov. xxiv. 8. 3. They also carry us too far, and procure an attempting of all that at once and unadvisedly, which would require Time and Deliberation, that it might be done to some good Purpose: I plead not for unnecessary Delays, and should be very loth to gratify soft Nature upon whatsoever Pretext; yet we ought not to give Cause or unnecessary Occasion to the Eruptions of Wrath, or other Evils in one or other, seeing an irritated Mind rendereth itself thereby incapable of Conviction. Many Things may be said, and done by Degrees, which would quite choak, and could never go down together, and some Things may be seasonable and useful to some Persons, and in some circumstanced Cases, which would be most unadvised and mischievous in others. *A wise Man's Heart discerneth both Time and Judgment. Ecc. viii. 5.* I think that Passage concerning the Lord Jesus, very sweet, clear and directive in this Case, namely, *I have yet many Things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. John xvi. 12.* Our gracious Lord withheld nothing that was meet from his Disciples, but *freely declared the whole Counsel of God* unto them; yet in a most tender and condescending Way, such as they were fitted to bear; and the Apostles of the Gentiles, tho' without any sinful Neglect or Compliance, *became all Things to all Men*, by taking the most obliging lawful Measures to gain them

Nic. I understand, and close with your wholesome Advices: Physicians think Vehicles necessary for the Conveyance of some Medicines, which though harmless, yet require such Lenitives for overcoming the Reluctancy of the Patient, and
would

would never go down without them : A wholesome Medicament may be made too hot, or otherwise ill prepared, so that it neither can be received, nor, tho' violently thrust in, could it operate aright. Liquor must be poured in gently, and by Art, into narrow Vessels, and cannot enter otherwise. But to shew that my Soul also detesteth all sinful Compliances and Accommodations, I shall subjoin some scriptural Passages for confirming these Remarks which you have judiciously represented, 2 *Tim.* ii. 25. The Lord commandeth Teachers and others, in a Suitableness unto their private Station, with *Meekness to instruct even them who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging the Truth*: our Lord proposeth his own Example, as peculiarly shining forth in Meekness and Lowliness of Heart. This is that true and noble Temper which rendereth the most earnest Expressions of flaming Zeal, efficacious to their proper Ends ; whereas, our Passions are both sinful in themselves, injurious to the Cause, and provoking unto much Sin in others, *for the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God*. But not to insist, the Exhortation hath been often refreshful and strengthening to my Soul, *viz. Who is a wise Man, and endued with Knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good Conversation his Work with Meekness of Wisdom*, James iii. 13. i. 20. *Matt.* xii. 28, 29. But I remember you promised likewise to give some scriptural Rules of Conduct, I would gladly hear these.

Nic. Divers of them are either more plainly expressed, or may be easily gathered from the Premises ; yet seeing you desire a more particular Account,

count, I shall remind you of these following: 1. Let us labour thro' Grace carefully to guard against our own Spirits, both in the Lord's Matters, and in these Things, especially, which nearly concern ourselves; that Rebuke which our Lord gave to his Disciples, is most convincing and instructive with reference to this, *viz. Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of, Luke ix. 54, 55. 2 Kings i. 10. Elias*, in the Instance which they adduced, was moved with holy Zeal; but they were imposed upon by their own private Passions, tho' under the Semblance of Zeal, and in their Master's Cause. The Man *Moses*, the meekest upon the Face of the Earth, yet failed in this: That people *angered him at the Waters of Strife*, and provoked his Spirit, *so that he spake unadvisedly with his Lips, Psalm cvi. 32. Numb. xx. 7, 13.* And for as much as the Lord set a Mark upon this, tho' all was turned to good for *Moses* and *Aaron*, the Expressions of his just and holy Indignation against the Evil, are the more memorable, and we poor low Shrubs have need to be, through Grace, the more watchful, seeing the tallest Cedars have sustained Prejudice this way. 2. Even the Glimmerings of Nature, and much more revealed Light, teacheth us not to resolve or act when our Passions are aloft, I mean, chiefly in these things which are the Matter of them, and intangle us, in whatsoever Manner it may be. I confess that we are most forward and violent in such Cases, and will readily pretend a Necessity of Haste, and that the Business cannot suffer a Delay, when yet the whole of this Haste is owing to the Perturbation of our Minds, and not to any Necessity in the Thing. The greatest real Haste

is, that we should lay aside those violent Passions, and this is our nearest and more immediate Duty. We ought to *acknowledge the Lord in all our Ways*, and with Humility and Meekness to wait for his Counsel, *Prov. iii. 6.* But seeing the Disturbance and Irritation of our Spirits incapacitateth us for applying to the Throne of Grace, by *lifting up holy Hands without Wrath, &c. Psal. cvi. 13, and ciii. 5. 1 Tim. ii. 8.* and carrieth us quite off from setting the Lord before us; it is manifest, that the first and immediate Duty in this Case, is to cry to the Lord, and to attend upon him, for bringing our Hearts to a Christian Temper, that so we may resolve and act christianly. 3. It is necessary, and of a most convincing and alluring Efficacy, through Grace, that we demean ourselves in a generous and disinterested Manner in the Lord's Matters, I mean such as may evidence to the Conviction of unprejudiced Beholders, that we detest partial and selfish Regards; for seeing both the current of corrupt Nature runneth strongly this way, which rendereth us the more obnoxious to be *drawn away of our own Lusts and enticed* to manifold Evils, suiting the forementioned Bias, and that we are liable to be much mistaken by those who know no other Motive or Way of acting; we have the greater Cause to be watchful, that *the Eye may be single, Matt. vi. 22.*

Phil. I acknowledge this, but it is general, and leaveth men in the dark as to the Character of that generous and disinterested Behaviour.

Nic. I shall labour to satisfy you upon the Head, if the little that I know shall reach that End. I think it is a truly generous and disinterested Behaviour, 1. When the Person is easy, tractable, and

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condescending in his own Matters, willing to yield for the Glory of God, and the Gaining or Edification of his Neighbour, without sticking at any Thing, whereof he may lawfully dispose, in so far as the Attainment of those Ends shall require; yet constant and resolute in the Lord's Matters, without giving Way in any Concern of his Honour as to Truth, Sin, or Duty, *1 Cor.* ix. 19. xx. 21, &c. *Exod.* x. 8, 9, 10. *Gal.* ii. 5. and v. 1, 2, 3, &c. 2. In Cases of a mixed Nature, wherein we also have our Concern, whether as to our Persons, or any in whom we have Interest; it is a noble and christian Behaviour, to overlook and be silent as to that which is personal, while the great Interest of the Lord's Honour swalloweth us up entirely, and nothing is regarded by us, but in so far as inlaid with that great End, *Exod.* xxxii. 9, 10. 32. *Rom* ix. 1.

Phil. I understand in some Measure that which you intend, and shall consider your Answers more maturely, as it may please the Lord to direct and influence. We have now dwelt long upon Providence, and I have adventured far upon your Patience, in proposing my Scruples, because my Tossings upon this Head have been great and various: And I must acknowledge, that the Lord hath graciously bestowed Light by this familiar Mean. I have yet one further Difficulty, wherein I beg a renewed Extent of your Patience to hear me a little, designing herewith to conclude my Doubts on this Purpose; and suffer me, honoured Sir, to be a little prolix in my Representation, because I have had many Strugglings on the Head, and yet have not the Art to couch and contract Matters as were

desireable. The whole amounteth to this, It is not to be doubted, but that after the Lord hath brought the elect Person to a State of Light, every Degree of Increase of that Light is a Blessing incomparably preferable to any secular Enjoyment. Nevertheless it would seem, that some Persons truly gracious, are at considerable Disadvantages beyond others who fear the Lord, even because of that, which they would sincerely judge, and will in reality be found Light from him, in their respectively circumstanced Cases. It is hard, and appeareth morally impossible to live either in the World, or in any Church Society, as Churches are now constituted, without some Degree of Condescension, which they who are more straitned, must needs look upon as a Piece of unwarrantable Latitude, and chiefly when they are so stated, as to have the Charge and Inspection of some Part of those Societies. The Divine Prescript is plain and peremptory, more especially with Reference to the distinguishing and sealing Ordinances; yet the Strength of Satan's Kingdom, and the general Prevailency of Sin in all Ranks of Persons rendereth a suitable Behaviour, many think, impracticable, but assuredly uneasy and obnoxious to Inconveniences and Troubles, which are thought insupportable. Now here lieth the Stress of Difficulty; some who fear the Lord, have, and exercise a Liberty or Latitude in these, and the like Cases, whereby they are sheltered from the Troubles unto which others cannot escape to be exposed, by reason of their Scruples: Thus also they enjoy freer Access to a more diffusive usefulness in their Generation, than others can attain unto, in a Consistency with their Light and Persua-

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sion; what shall these do in this Case? They cannot lay aside their positive Judgment as to that which, they sincerely think, the Lord hath taught them; they dare not offer Violence to their Light and Conviction, and tremble at a conforming and accommodating their Deportment unto the more general Sentiments and Practices, which in their Case, would be, to some Degree, a sinning wilfully, after that they have received the Knowledge of the Truth. Nevertheless their Faithfulness, thro' Grace, unto the Lord's teaching and guiding, incompasseth them with such Difficulties on all Hands, as have scarce any Appearance of Possibility to be removed. I incline not to enlarge this, nor to condescend upon Particulars, which are not fit to be mentioned. The Pinch lieth here in few Words, namely, in this case, those who have more Light, seem to be much worse stated than they who have less, or the Person himself was, when he saw not so far: Hereupon Temptations ensue, which did he gave way to them, would cause him secretly to wish that he had still continued in the more general Sentiments, which would have allowed him to take more easy Courses, seeing divers whom he honoureth as truly gracious continue to do so. Pardon my Weakness, which hath procured so much Prolixity, and give me your Thoughts towards a removing of the Difficulty.

Nic. Let your Eyes be only towards the Lord; you may consider the following Particulars for that Effect, till it please him to give more Light. 1. If I may be so free, dear Sir, I would remind you, that the State of your Objection, and even in that Part which containeth its greatest Strength, is very
unlike

unlike, yea, and cross to the Strain of the Gospel. It were superfluous to be large in reminding you of Particulars, seeing the whole Tenor of the Gospel beareth, That all who follow our Lord Jesus must, and in Effect do *deny themselves, and take up their Cross daily and follow him. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution, Mat x. 38. and xvi. 24. 2 Tim iii. 2. Matt. v 29, 30.* Neither is there any Possibility of Access to the Kingdom of Heaven, without cutting off the right Hand, and putting out the right Eye. To bring this more closely home, you alledge that a clearer Light, and Faithfulness to it, is a Sort of Hardship, because of its exposing Persons to Trouble and Persecution, &c. If this conclude, it would equally follow, that the whole of the Gospel, and the owning of any fundamental Truth were as much a Hardship, when Matters are so stated, as sometimes they have been, that such Things are contradicted, and opposed by a prevailing Power. I see no Disparity in the Case, save that Persecutions and Trials are more subtle and refined, according to the Measure of Light and Faithfulness attained; and this sure is no Disparity, and inferreth no more save a Degree of *denying ourselves, and taking up our Cross*, suitable to the proportioned Degree of Advance in following the Lord. 2. I take the Liberty to acquaint you, that a great Deal of your Objection is much of a piece with the Sluggard's Quarrel against his plain Duty. Ah! says he, *there is a Lion in the Way, I shall be devoured in the Streets*, while in the mean Time he sitteth still loitering in his Sloth. Our soft Natures would gladly have the Coast clear, and every Step of the Way satisfyingly

ingly adjusted, before we enter upon it, which were to live wholly by Sight, and to leave no place for Faith, directly contrary to Scripture, 2 *Cor.* v. 7. *Gal.* ii. 20. *Heb.* x. 38, &c. The Carriage of these desirable Women who went to enquire for our Lord Jesus after his Resurrection, was truly generous and commendable. The Grave was sealed, the Watchmen attended it, a great Stone was rolled to its Mouth; yet they go on in the Search and Inquiry, leaving the whole Conduct upon the Lord, and intrusting him with the Removal of, or carrying them through all the Difficulties which were in their Way, *Matt.* xxviii. *Mark* xvi. We have clear and good Ground to go upon, namely, that our gracious Lord sendeth none a Warfare upon their own Charges, and may well adventure upon the Credit of his Command and Promise, who will assuredly accomplish his Word in every Thing. 3. As to that Part of the Objection which concerneth gracious Persons, and the greater Liberty which they enjoy: I think it my Duty to be very cautious, being loath to mistake one or other, especially any who fear the Lord. We know at best but in part, and different Measures of Light, will procure a Diversity of Practice. Yet I may say it with Confidence in the general, that the sparing of the right Hand or Eye is the assured Way to ruin, and that the regarding Iniquity in our Hearts, precludeth us from Access unto the Lord, and Acceptance with him, *Matt.* v. 29. *Pf.* lxvi. 18.

Phil. It is properly the right Hand and Eye, I acknowledge, which stateth the 'Trial': These Members are in themselves, and Lusts which have the like Place in our Affections, are thought excellent

lent and useful, and therefore want not many specious Reasons, which plead strongly for sparing in the Case, *Psalms* xxxii. 1, 2. and xxv. 21. and cxix. 128. But as there can be no Controversy about the Rule in such Events, so no Person who feareth the Lord, doth, or will live in the Practice of any Thing, that he knoweth, or feareth to be sinful, which really were to juggle in Matters of the greatest Weight, and this every Child of God abhorreth. All of them, I confess, have not the same Measure of Light, yet they are, each of them, sincerely in Love with Light: And as to that which they know not, it is their earnest Desire that the Lord would teach it them, *Job* xxxiv. 32. But what say you, honoured Sir, of the Ease and Conveniences which they enjoy, who may truly fear the Lord, and yet in many Things comply with the usual Courses of these respective Times wherein they live.

Nic. I really think, that the main Stress of the Difficulty lieth here; yet I would be loath to think one unbeseeming Thought of any who beareth Christ's Stamp, but still with a due Regard to Truth, with which nothing may come in Competition. Hereupon, and with all becoming Respect to these excellent Ones of the Earth, I would have you to consider, that whatsoever Defect of Light any who fear the Lord may labour under, it will be found that the State of their spiritual Concerns is accordingly low, and they in a proportioned Measure destitute of much sweet Enlargement and Comfort, which otherwise they would enjoy under clearer Manifestations. Corruptions are accordingly uneasy, and Temptations work with the greater Vigour

Vigour and Efficacy upon them, all which, together with Doubts, Uncertainties, and manifold Rackings of Mind, from thence resulting, are found so heavy, that such as understand these Things will not readily think the Damages compensated by any Concurrence of secular Advantages, howsoever great they may be.

Phil. I agree with all this, nevertheless I think you will likewise acknowledge, and the Thing cannot be denied, being plain Matter of Fact; namely, that some may have Light as to diverse controverted Particulars of their Day, whose spiritual Matters are yet not very comfortably stated in other, and these the more especial and principal Regards. What say you to this, which is the chief Part of my Difficulty?

Nic. I answer, 1. which you will easily grant, *viz.* That the Objection hath no Relation towards invalidating or unhinging in the least the Matter of Sin and Duty: These are still the same, whether we be straitned or enlarged; but I know that you intended not so. I add then, 2d. Another Particular, which I have observed in others, and found also in my own Case, *viz.* That sincere Aims at Faithfulness to the Lord in the real and important, thro' difficult Duties of the Day, was blessed, as one of the properest Means through Grace, for overcoming these Difficulties in the weightiest Concerns of our christian Work and Warfare: And when Persons so stated as aforesaid, have found Grace in the Lord's Sight, honestly to adventure for him in the most, to the Flesh, uneasy, and opposed Duties of their Day, and laid their Account with whatsoever Hardships might attend or follow

them, tho' they may have begun and gone on for a time with considerable Straitness as to the Main; yet it hath pleased the Lord in these Ways to loose their Bands, and to enrich them with a more plentiful Enjoyment of the Liberty and Privileges of the Children of God, than they durst have adventured to expect, while others who had not the Courage so far to appear before the Lord, have continued sunk in Depths of Darknes and Confusion, as to their most important spiritual Matters. Of this I could have particular Documents, were it needful, yet nothing is here intended to flatter any who place the whole of their Religion in a real or imagined Straightness, with Reference to some controverted Duties of their Day, when otherwise they continue Strangers to the Life of God.

Phil. You go a great Way, honoured Sir, towards the setting of this Matter in a clear and satisfying Light; yet such is my Weakness that I still continue under some Overcloudings, tho' I cannot condescend on any positive Objection against that which you have taught me. Bear with me then, that I desire some further Instruction about the Matter, tho' not with reference to any Particular, which I can or dare except.

Nic. I shall endeavour to do so, only let me premise this Caution, namely, that it is a most dangerous Evil, a great Sin and Snare to entertain an anxious Solicitude of Unbelief, because of the Want of that Light, about the Manner of Things, which otherwise were desireable, and the Scriptures declare. Sure I am, the Duty is plain in the Case, *viz.* To believe the Lord's Testimony, and in this Posture, through his Grace, to attend for more
Light

Light from him. Beyond Doubt many Things were dark in the Conduct of that trying Command which the-Lord gave unto Abraham, *viz.* To sacrifice his Son, *Gen.* xxii. 1, 2, 3. Yet that eminent Believer held fast the divine Testimony, both in that and other difficult Matters, and quietly attended upon the Lord in the Way of Duty, until the Decree break forth, and remaining Mists were happily dispelled, *Hab.* ii. 3, 4. *Rom* iv, 17, 18, 19, 20, &c. *Heb.* x. 37, 38, &c.

Phil. This Caution is necessary; the Lord grant that I may understand and observe it. Assuredly, the Way of Unbelief is not the Way of waiting upon the Lord for Light, Life, or any Blessing. I have much Sin and Harm of this Sort to bemoan, yet the Lord hath pitied and pardoned, and will further display the Riches of his Grace. But pray, Sir, come more closely to the Purpose intermitted by this little Digression, which I confess was necessary, and I hope the Lord will make useful.

Nic. To sum up all that I can further represent upon the Head in one Particular, I would have you to consider that known Passage, *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God, Matt.* v. 8. I need not attempt to open the Words; the Position at which I aim is abundantly plain, and they express almost so much *in terminis, viz.* That Tenderneſs of Heart and a conscious Stricteſs and Circumspection of Way, flowing from a Principle of saving Grace, is the assured Mean for enjoying much of the Lord's gracious Presence, with the special Blessings therewith inlaid, and the distinguishing Effects of the same throughout the Course of our Warfare. In a glorious Estate where Purity is complete,

the Seeing of the Lord is also perfect, and the one and other bear a lovely Proportion in the Entrance and Progress of a christian Course. Hence, whatsoever Difficulties the Believer may be exposed unto by and in such Ways as are ordinarily reputed Singularities; yet if they be real Matters of Sin and Duty, he hath solid and good Ground of free Mercy, to expect a proportioned Measure of seeing God in the Maintenance and Increase of Purity in Heart and Way: And if this satisfy not, which I think is the most of Heaven that can be enjoyed upon Earth, I can say no more. Assuredly it is enough, and our All for Time and Eternity, to be the Lord's, to be for him, and to live in the Enjoyment of him. Let us *seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*, Matt. vi. 33. and xix. 29. and in this Way other Things shall not be wanting, and our gracious Lord will, of free Mercy, bestow *the Hundred fold even in this Life*, in so far as we are called to forsake any Thing for him.

Phil. I am satisfied as to what concerneth my chief Scruple, and remember not of any further Difficulty which straitned me about Providence: Only seeing you speak of an Hundred-fold, which it pleaseth the Lord to bestow in this Life, as afore-said, I would gladly have more Light towards the Understanding of that Promise, or that severals who truly fear the Lord, and forsake Father and Mother, Houses, Lands or other Possessions, in Defence of Truth, are notwithstanding sometimes left considerably destitute, and not a little straitened both in their temporal and spiritual Enjoyments. Now how to reconcile this with a Promise so clear, sweet and encouraging, is a Difficulty which I have not as yet
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overcome. I desire with my whole Heart to believe the Thing, because the Lord hath plainly revealed it; yet some more of Light towards the Understanding the Suitableness of Providence in all this, unto the Word, would greatly strengthen me.

Nic. We may not understand that Hundred-fold, as denoting secular Enjoyments, because the Spirit of the Lord expressly declareth its Consistency with Persecution. *Mark* x. 30. *Heb.* x. 32, 33, 34. And you know that these Goods are ordinarily the first, or amongst the first of the Things which Persecution affecteth. It must then most necessarily, at least mainly, be understood of some spiritual Enjoyment of Value sufficient to compensate, and that a Hundred-fold, any Damage which may be sustained by a chearful Relinquishment of these worldly Things.

Phil. I incline to think so, yet notwithstanding I labour under a twofold Difficulty, being both straitened about the Knowledge of what that is, and at a loss how to reconcile it with spiritual Intanglements of some excellent Ones of the Earth; as to both which, I crave your riper Thoughts.

Nic. Your first Query, or the first Branch of your Proposal is the Chief, and the other dependeth upon the Resolution of it; for if once we find what the Hundred fold is, our Way will be the plainer towards the clearing its other Branch, tho' yet upon a second view, I must confess that it wanteth not its considerable Difficulties, even considered apart. To return then to the Hundred-fold; I hope you will easily grant, that all worldly Things, are in the Lord's Appointment, subordinated to a higher End. The Word and Works of the Lord bear Testimony

timony concerning him, and are destinated for that Effect ; hence it hath no Shadow of Stretch, but is a plain and obvious Truth, that the Hundred-fold in this Life is gained, in so far as, 1. The great and sweet End is reached, and the Believer advanceth in the saving Knowledge of and Communion with one God in Three Persons, as manifested in the Gospel. The very Marrow of worldly Things is but a Mass of Husks, and all these Enjoyments are but meer Snares without this ; and seeing the great End is happily attained by a chearful and believing Relinquishment of them all for Christ's sake in the Maintenance of Truth and Duty, the forsaking is an hundred fold preferable to the retaining of them. 2. As in this Way the Lord provideth wonderfully that which is needful for his poor persecuted Followers, or blesteth all their Wants and Distresses unto them ; so his Blessing and Countenance with that which he giveth and ordereth, rendereth it so inexpressibly sweet, that all which Creatures can afford, is not once to be compared with so high a Privilege. *Phil. iv 18. 1 Cor. iii. 21. I have all, says the Apostle of the Gentiles, and abound, I am full, &c. God hath dealt graciously with me, saith Jacob, and I have enough, or all, as the Low-Dutch render it. All Things are yours, and in this Manner it is found, that the meek inherit the Earth.*

Phil. I am in some Measure satisfied about the first Branch, and would not think any Trial about secular Enjoyments considerable, were it not that many spiritual Intanglements thro' the Prevalency of Unbelief do often accompany Distresses of that Nature, which straiten me now to understand the hundred fold in a Consistency with them.

Nic. Pray, Sir, 1. Do not alter the State of the Question which expressly relateth to that forsaking of Houses, Brethren, Sisters, &c. which is adventured upon for Righteousness sake, and these spiritual Intanglements of which you speak, will not, I judge, be much found in the Case, as thus circumstanced, seeing a resolute Suffering in the Cause of Christ, is the ordinary Way wherein much of the Liberty of the Children of God is happily attained, even by these who were in Bonds before. 2. I would have you to take Notice, that much lyeth in the Term *forsake*, which properly characterizeth this Duty, and in particular, a *forsaking* for the *Name of Christ*, as the Text expresseth it. When either the Heart cleaveth, tho' there be an external abandoning, or the Relinquishment, such as it is, is chiefly procured by other Motives, it cannot be reckoned a Forsaking, either in the Terms of the Text, or even the Nature of the Thing; and therefore we are not concerned about these Intanglements which result from a Heart-addictedness to any worldly Enjoyment, because the Promise is expressly made to the *forsaking* of all these Things, and the Hundred-fold cannot reasonably be expected in any other way, save this which the Lord hath plainly set down. 3. We may not limite our sovereign Lord in this Matter, or any Way; a little of the Blessings mentioned is of more than an hundred fold value beyond all the Enjoyments of the Word; a little of Gold is of more value than a Heap of Lead; and as every gracious Person hath somewhat of these first Fruits of Glory, so they shall be preserved and increased to a full Maturity in the Lord's Time and Way, notwithstanding

standing of many Doubts, Fears, Turns, and Tossings in the Progress: All which are our Sins, and procured by Sin on our Part.

Phil. I carry this no further, and am refreshed with that which you have taught me; neither dare I doubt, but that the Lord will give more Light, in a Suitableness to every new Occurrence of Temptation.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I Thought to have proceeded further in these Dialogues, and my Friends had with some Difficulty prevailed with me to give in two of the following, namely, the Seventh and Eighth, which were in all that Readiness to which I could bring them, in a Suitableness unto the Nature of the Work, being Christian Recreations; and I shall be so free as to represent, that I could have desired, if any at all, that rather the two following had seen the Light, than some of the preceeding. But somewhat uneasy occurred, which did render the Publication of more impracticable at this time. If it please the Lord that these few Sheets be of Use towards the advancing of any Interest of Christ's Kingdom and Gospel, more may be added as the Lord shall vouchsafe to clear our Way: One Reason which bore Weight, and inclined me to a Readiness for publishing the Eighth, was the great Import of its Subject, viz. God's Covenant with Man, and particularly, a Desire to clear some Things contained in a Print lately published, and entitled, *The Covenants of Redemption and Grace displayed*, &c. and which I understand would require some further Elucidation, towards a Removal of Mistakes about them, which divers labour under, to whom I owe much Respect.

Nevertheless, I remember not to have heard any considerable Exception, which is not, upon the Matter, touched one Way or another, and obviated or removed, as to the Main, in the Work itself; but treated at greater Length in the foresaid

Eighth Dialogue, which yet is providentially, at least for a Time, suppress'd; only there is an Hypothesis advanced in the forementioned Print, *viz. The Covenants displayed*, which would require a larger Illustration, and an Essay is made for that Effect in the foresaid Dialogue.

Nevertheless, I shall adventure to say one Word about it here, by Way of Advance. The Hypothesis is, *viz.* That the Habits of Grace do in Order of Nature follow our Union with Christ as being the native Result thereof; and cannot be said in Order of Nature to precede that Union, which would infer, that the Person is endued with all the Habits of Grace, and yet in Order of Nature is not in Christ. From this it followeth, that the first Stirring of Faith, by which the Soul is united to Christ, from whatsoever supernatural Principle it may flow, cannot properly be reputed to proceed from an Habit antecedently infused.

Now for removing the too harsh Impression which some worthy Persons may have conceived of this, I crave leave to lay before them these few Positions in so many Words, *1mo*, Fallen Man is a meer Compound of Darknes and Enmity. *2do*, The only Remedy for this, is to be found in these Manifestations which the Lord giveth of himself, and whereby elect Sinners are brought from Darknes into Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. *3tio*, Whatsoever the Lord discovereth in his Word and by his Spirit concerning himself, the elect Sinner is made to receive and entertain it in a Suitableness unto the Ends of the Discóvery. *4to*, Notwithstanding of all this, and what the Lord is pleased to work in a preparative Way; yet the Veil

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continueth upon the Heart, and none of the Habits of Grace have, or can have place, until the Glory of Christ be manifested by his arising as the Sun of Righteousness upon the Soul, with Healing under his Wings. Hence, *5to*, This is the Order of the Lord's Working, so near as, through Grace, I ever could observe it : *1mo*, The Soul is quite darkened before the happy Visit of the Day-spring from on high; and therefore destitute of the Habits of Grace. *2do*, God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, shineth into the Heart, to give the Light of the Knowledge of his Glory in the Face of Jesus Christ. *3tio*, This Light, conveyed with a strong Hand, entereth in upon the dark Dungeon of the Heart, and is received by the Person with much Joy and Sweetness; which Reception I reckon to be the first Stirring of Faith, and suitably enough to the Tenor of the Word, which designeth it a Receiving. *4to*, As in the Way of the aforesaid Manifestation of Christ, the mystical Union betwixt him and the Believer is brought on and consummated, so before the Reception of this Light, the Habits of Grace cannot be said to have a Place, unless we affirm, that Faith, and all the Graces of the Spirit are seated in a darkened Mind, for our Minds must needs be understood to be darkened before the Entrance and Reception of the Light, as was before cleared; and we all acknowledge, that a Subjection unto the Power of Satan floweth from, and is connected with the State of Darkness.

I have no Design in all this, either to assert pre-emptorily in a Matter controverted by the most eminent Divines, and far less to disparage the con-

contrary Sentiment, which I acknowledge is more generally received by the most renowned of them, and am really more willing to receive than to offer: Light and Instruction; especially in Matters of so great Weight and Difficulty: Only I shall be bold to say, that the preceeding Draught, how rude soever, is yet the most nearly adjusted unto that which I have been made to observe of the Lord's Way towards my own Soul; yet in all this, and every religious Concern, it is my sincere Desire, that what I see not, the Lord would teach me.

T H E E N D.





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